

Case Number:	CM15-0216729		
Date Assigned:	11/06/2015	Date of Injury:	02/17/2015
Decision Date:	12/18/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/09/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/03/2015

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The expert reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:

State(s) of Licensure: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

The injured worker is a 24 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 2-17-15. A review of the medical records indicates he is undergoing treatment for cervical myospasm, cervical radiculopathy, cervical sprain and strain, thoracic myospasm, and thoracic sprain and strain. Medical records (4-30-15, 6-4-15, 7-2-15, and 10-2-15) indicate ongoing complaints of head pain, rating "5-6 out of 10", "mild" dull neck pain, and "mild" sharp upper and mid back pain. The physical exam (10-2-15) reveals diminished and painful range of motion in the cervical spine. Tenderness to palpation is noted of the cervical paravertebral muscles. Muscle spasms are noted in the paravertebral muscles. The cervical compression test is positive. The thoracic spine range of motion is noted to be painful. Tenderness to palpation of the thoracic paravertebral muscles, as well as muscle spasms is noted. Kemp's test causes pain bilaterally. Diagnostic studies have included CT scans of the cervical and thoracic spine - results pending, an EMG-NCV study of bilateral lower extremities, and a functional capacity evaluation. Treatment has included at least 15 sessions of physical therapy, one chiropractic session, and acupuncture. The injured worker is working full-duty. Effects of his symptoms on activities of daily living are not addressed in the provided records. The treatment plan includes physical therapy 2x4 to increase range of motion, increase activities of daily living, and decrease pain. The utilization review (10-9-15) includes a request for authorization of physical therapy 2 times a week for 3 weeks for the cervical and lumbar spine. The request was denied.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

Physical therapy 2xWk x 3Wks for the cervical and lumbar spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004, and Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Physical Medicine. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Treatment for Workers Compensation Online Edition 2015.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Physical Medicine.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on physical medicine states: Recommended as indicated below. Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) can provide short term relief during the early phases of pain treatment and are directed at controlling symptoms such as pain, inflammation and swelling and to improve the rate of healing soft tissue injuries. They can be used sparingly with active therapies to help control swelling, pain and inflammation during the rehabilitation process. Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function, range of motion, and can alleviate discomfort. Active therapy requires an internal effort by the individual to complete a specific exercise or task. This form of therapy may require supervision from a therapist or medical provider such as verbal, visual and/or tactile instruction(s). Patients are instructed and expected to continue active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. Home exercise can include exercise with or without mechanical assistance or resistance and functional activities with assistive devices. (Colorado, 2002) (Airaksinen, 2006) Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. (Li, 2005) The use of active treatment modalities (e.g., exercise, education, activity modification) instead of passive treatments is associated with substantially better clinical outcomes. In a large case series of patients with low back pain treated by physical therapists, those adhering to guidelines for active rather than passive treatments incurred fewer treatment visits, cost less, and had less pain and less disability. The overall success rates were 64.7% among those adhering to the active treatment recommendations versus 36.5% for passive treatment. (Fritz, 2007) Physical Medicine Guidelines, Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine. Myalgia and myositis, unspecified (ICD9 729.1): 9-10 visits over 8 weeks; Neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis, unspecified (ICD9 729.2) 8-10 visits over 4 weeks; Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (CRPS) (ICD9 337.2): 24 visits over 16 weeks. The goal of physical therapy is graduation to home therapy after a certain amount of recommended sessions. The patient has already completed physical therapy. The request is in excess of these recommendations per the California MTUS. There is no objective reason why the patient would not be moved to home therapy after completing the recommended amount of supervised sessions in the provided clinical documentation. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.