

Case Number:	CM15-0032629		
Date Assigned:	02/26/2015	Date of Injury:	05/01/2004
Decision Date:	04/07/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/06/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/20/2015

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: New Jersey, Michigan, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular Medicine

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 57 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on May 1, 2004. He has reported right arm and wrist pain. The diagnoses have included lateral epicondylitis of the elbow. Treatment to date has included therapy, bracing, cortisone injections, wrist surgery, medications, and imaging studies. A progress note dated January 30, 2015 indicates a chief complaint of continued right arm and wrist pain. Physical examination showed right elbow tenderness to palpation over the radial tunnel. The treating physician is requesting hand therapy for twelve visits, twice each week for six weeks for right tennis elbow and right radial tunnel. On February 6, 2015 Utilization Review denied the request citing the California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule California Chronic Pain Medical treatment Guidelines. On February 20, 2015, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR of a request for hand therapy for twelve visits, twice each week for six weeks for right tennis elbow and right radial tunnel.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Hand therapy, 12 visits, 2xWk x 6 Wks for right tennis elbow and right radial tunnel:
 Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 10 Elbow Disorders (Revised 2007), Chapter 11 Forearm, Wrist, and Hand Complaints, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 98.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Physical Medicine is “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) There is no documentation of objective findings that support musculoskeletal dysfunction requiring more physical therapy. There is no detailed, recent and objective evaluation of the patient right upper extremity condition. There is no documentation of the outcome of previous physical therapy session. There is no justification for the prescription of 12 sessions of physical therapy without documentation of the efficacy of the first visits. Therefore Hand therapy, 12 visits, 2xWk x 6 Wks for right tennis elbow and right radial tunnel is not medically necessary.