

Case Number:	CM15-0033610		
Date Assigned:	02/27/2015	Date of Injury:	05/25/2004
Decision Date:	04/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/22/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/23/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Chiropractor, Oriental 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:

This 61 year old female sustained an industrial injury 5/25/04, with subsequent ongoing pain to the lumbar spine, cervical spine, hips, bilateral upper extremities, knee, left foot and right ankle. Treatment included physical therapy, massage, aqua therapy, acupuncture and medications. In an orthopedic status report dated 12/22/14, the injured worker complained of pain to the cervical spine, lumbar spine, bilateral shoulders, bilateral elbows, bilateral wrist, bilateral hips and left knee pain 5-9/10. The injured worker reported that ongoing acupuncture and aqua therapy had provided improvement. The injured worker had just completed 12 sessions of acupuncture with reported decreased pain and disability. The treatment plan included continuing medications (Fentanyl patch, Valium, Tylenol #3 and Nexium), continuing home exercise, requesting authorization for an epidural steroid injection and requesting authorization for 12 additional sessions of acupuncture. On 1/22/15, Utilization Review noncertified a request for 12 Acupuncture Visits 3 Times A Week for 4 Weeks noting lack of documentation of objective improvement following previous acupuncture and citing CA MTUS Guidelines. As a result of the UR denial, an IMR was filed with the Division of Workers Comp.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

12 Acupuncture Visits 3 Times A Week for 4 Weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: Patient has had prior acupuncture treatment. Provider requested additional 12 acupuncture sessions which were non-certified by the utilization review. Requested visits exceed the quantity supported by cited guidelines. Medical notes reported decreased medication intake however, not in a verifiable manner. There is no assessment in the provided medical records of functional efficacy with prior acupuncture visits. Medical reports reveal little evidence of significant changes or improvement in findings, revealing a patient who has not achieved significant objective functional improvement to warrant additional treatment. Additional visits may be rendered if the patient has documented objective functional improvement. Per MTUS guidelines, Functional improvement means either a clinically significant improvement in activities of daily living or a reduction in work restrictions as measured during the history and physical exam or decrease in medication intake. Per review of evidence and guidelines, 12 acupuncture treatments are not medically necessary.