

Case Number:	CM15-0041401		
Date Assigned:	03/11/2015	Date of Injury:	06/05/2002
Decision Date:	04/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/19/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/04/2015

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 36 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on June 5, 2002. He has reported lower back pain and buttock pain. Diagnoses have included myalgia, lumbar spine strain, lumbar spine radicular pain, lumbar spine facet joint pain, lumbar spine degenerative disc disease, chronic pain syndrome, numbness, and depression. Treatment to date has included medications, massage therapy, spinal cord stimulator, home exercise, and imaging studies. A progress note dated February 10, 2015 indicates a chief complaint of lower back pain, buttock pain and right leg pain. The treating physician documented a plan of care that included continue home exercise, heat and ice, and medications. Additional massage therapy was also recommended as the injured worker benefitted from treatment in the past.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

6 massage therapy sessions: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Massage Therapy.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines massage therapy Page(s): 60.

Decision rationale: The California MTUS section on massage therapy states: Recommended as an option as indicated below. This treatment should be an adjunct to other recommended treatment (e.g. exercise), and it should be limited to 4-6 visits in most cases. Scientific studies show contradictory results. Furthermore, many studies lack long-term follow-up. Massage is beneficial in attenuating diffuse musculoskeletal symptoms, but beneficial effects were registered only during treatment. Massage is a passive intervention and treatment dependence should be avoided. This lack of long-term benefits could be due to the short treatment period or treatments such as these do not address the underlying causes of pain. (Hasson, 2004) A very small pilot study showed that massage can be at least as effective as standard medical care in chronic pain syndromes. Relative changes are equal, but tend to last longer and to generalize more into psychologic domains. (Walach 2003) The strongest evidence for benefits of massage is for stress and anxiety reduction, although research for pain control and management of other symptoms, including pain, is promising. The physician should feel comfortable discussing massage therapy with patients and be able to refer patients to a qualified massage therapist as appropriate. (Corbin 2005) Massage is an effective adjunct treatment to relieve acute postoperative pain in patients who had major surgery, according to the results of a randomized controlled trial recently published in the Archives of Surgery. (Mitchinson, 2007) The patient has already received massage therapy. The request for additional sessions is in excess of the 4-6 sessions recommended per the California MTUS. Therefore, the request is not certified.