

Case Number:	CM15-0045035		
Date Assigned:	03/16/2015	Date of Injury:	03/04/2014
Decision Date:	04/20/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/11/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/09/2015

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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & General Preventive 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 49-year-old male, with a reported date of injury of 03/04/2014. The diagnoses include lumbar disc protrusion, lumbar pain, lumbar radiculopathy, and lumbar sprain/strain. Treatments to date have included chiropractic treatment. The progress report dated 08/14/2014 indicates that the injured worker complained of constant, moderate, dull, achy, sharp low back pain and stiffness. He rated the pain 5 out of 10. The objective findings showed tenderness to palpation of the lumbar paravertebral muscles, muscle spasm of the lumbar paravertebral muscles, positive left sitting straight leg raise test, and decreased and painful lumbar flexion and extension. The treating physician requested physical therapy three times a week for four weeks for the lumbar spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical Therapy 3 x 4: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 98 and 99.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-315, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, Physical Medicine Page(s): 98-99. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Physical Therapy.

Decision rationale: California MTUS guidelines refer to physical medicine guidelines for physical therapy and recommends as follows: Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine. Additionally, ACOEM guidelines advise against passive modalities by a therapist unless exercises are to be carried out at home by patient. ODG quantifies its recommendations with 10 visits over 8 weeks for lumbar sprains/strains and 9 visits over 8 weeks for unspecified backache/lumbago. ODG further states that a six-visit clinical trial of physical therapy with documented objective and subjective improvements should occur initially before additional sessions are to be warranted. Medical records indicate this patient has attended at least 24 sessions of physical therapy. The treating physician has not provided documentation as to why this patient can not be transitioned to a home exercise program. As such, the request for Physical Therapy 3 x 4 is not medically necessary.