

Case Number:	CM15-0045859		
Date Assigned:	03/18/2015	Date of Injury:	07/05/2013
Decision Date:	04/23/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/06/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/11/2015

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: Massachusetts

Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

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 female, who sustained an industrial injury on 7/05/2013. She was diagnosed as having cervical/thoracic/lumbar spine sprain/strain, bilateral trigger fingers, bilateral wrist sprain and bilateral heel pain. Treatment to date has included medications, modified work, physical therapy and consultations. Per the Primary Treating Physician's Progress Report dated 1/22/2015, the injured worker reported constant, severe, sharp lower back pain radiating upwards to upper back pain. She states the pain comes more often and the upper back pain radiates downwards towards the left leg. Physical examination revealed tenderness to the cervical, lumbar and thoracic spine with muscle spasms. The right hand was tender over the ring finger, which triggers. The right wrist was volarly and dorsally tender. The plan of care included acupuncture, physical therapy, pool therapy, orthopedist consultation and medications. Authorization was requested for physical therapy (2x4) cervical, thoracic, lumbar, bilateral fingers, wrists and heels.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy 2x a week for 4 weeks for the wrists, heels, cervical, thoracic, lumbar and bilateral fingers: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: Physical Medicine is recommended as indicated below. Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the injured worker) 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). Injured workers 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) Injured worker-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 injured workers 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. According to the documents available for review, the current request for PT is for 6 separate body parts. PT should be focused on a major body part for the above noted frequency and duration. PT to 6 different areas concurrently is in contrast to the guidelines as set forth in the MTUS above. Therefore, at this time, the requirements for treatment have not been met and medical necessity has not been established. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.