

Case Number:	CM15-0057527		
Date Assigned:	04/02/2015	Date of Injury:	05/20/2013
Decision Date:	05/04/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/24/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/26/2015

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: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 (IW) is a 60-year-old male who sustained an industrial injury on 05/20/2013. Diagnoses include neck pain, low back pain and chronic myofascial pain. Treatment to date has included medications, left ankle surgery with subsequent hardware removal, multiple surgeries to remove joint infection and arthrodesis. Diagnostics performed to date included x-rays, CT scans and MRIs. The Qualified Medical Evaluation dated 1/12/15 stated the IW had post-operative left ankle infection, pulmonary embolism and bacteremia. According to the progress notes dated 12/17/14, the IW reported pain in the left foot that was improving. Objective findings were mild tenderness to the anterior aspect of the left ankle with no obvious motion. A request was made for 18 physical therapy sessions for the left ankle with evaluation for post-operative care.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

18 Physical therapy sessions for the left ankle with evaluation: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 14 Ankle and Foot Complaints, Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, pages 98-99.

Decision rationale: Physical therapy is considered medically necessary when the services require the judgment, knowledge, and skills of a qualified physical therapist due to the complexity and sophistication of the therapy and the physical condition of the patient. However, there is no clear measurable evidence of progress with the PT treatment already rendered including milestones of increased ROM, strength, and functional capacity. Review of submitted physician reports show no evidence of functional benefit, unchanged chronic symptom complaints, clinical findings, and functional status. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for visits of physical therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It appears the employee has received therapy sessions without demonstrated evidence of functional improvement to allow for additional therapy treatments. There is no report of acute flare-up, new injuries, or change in symptom or clinical findings to support for formal PT in a patient that has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic injury. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support further physical therapy when prior treatment rendered has not resulted in any functional benefit with current request for quantities beyond guideline's recommendations. The 18 Physical therapy sessions for the left ankle with evaluation is not medically necessary and appropriate.