

Case Number:	CM15-0085465		
Date Assigned:	05/08/2015	Date of Injury:	08/27/2003
Decision Date:	06/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/21/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/05/2015

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 is a 59 year old male with an industrial injury dated 08/27/2003. His diagnoses included cervical radiculopathy, abdominal pain and shoulder pain. Prior treatments included radio frequency ablation of lumbar medial branches, Synvisc injection to bilateral knees, epidural steroid injection, occupational therapy, medications and home exercise program. He presents on 02/25/2015 with complaints of low back, neck, right upper extremity and right shoulder pain. He was pleased with his recent bilateral lumbar 3-5 radio frequency ablation performed on 12/30/2014. He was not using any pain medications at the time of the visit. His sitting and standing tolerance was one hour and walking 30 minutes. His main complaint was neck pain rated as 7/10. Physical exam revealed tenderness over left sacroiliac joint. There was negative bilateral facet loading. There was pain with cervical tilt. He was tender to palpation over the bilateral trapezius muscles. The provider documents the injured worker has had significant benefit for the lumbar spine in regards to improvement in activities of daily living with physical therapy. The treatment plan consisted of a request for cervical trigger point injections, physical therapy to lumbar spine and continue home exercise program.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical Therapy Twice Per Week for 4 Weeks for The Lumbar Spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain 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 significant 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. The Physical Therapy Twice Per Week for 4 Weeks for The Lumbar Spine is not medically necessary and appropriate.