

Case Number:	CM15-0088837		
Date Assigned:	05/13/2015	Date of Injury:	12/10/2014
Decision Date:	06/12/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/16/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/08/2015

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 52-year-old male, with a reported date of injury of 12/10/2014. The diagnoses include lumbar sprain/strain. Treatments to date have included physical therapy and Motrin. The progress report dated 02/06/2015 indicates that the injured worker stated that Motrin was helping with his low back pain. He rated the pain 5 out of 10, and reported that he was performing regular duties. It was noted that the injured worker had not improved significantly. The objective findings include decreased lumbar range of motion with pain. No other objective findings were documented. He has been instructed to return to full duty without restrictions. The physical therapy evaluation dated 02/09/2015 indicates that the injured worker rated his pain 5 out of 10. He reported upper low back pain and stiffness, with no lower extremity radicular complaint. The back pain was worse with prolong sitting, and improved with walking. The objective findings decreased lordosis, tenderness of the lumbar paraspinals, decreased lumbar range of motion, and negative straight leg raise. The goals included to reduce pain to a level of 0-1, to normalize strength, to improve lift task tolerances, to improve functional and activities of daily living levels to prior level, to improve trunk stabilization, and independence in a home program. The treating physician requested physical therapy 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 for the lumbar spine, twice a week for three weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines physical medicine Page(s): 98-99.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on physical medicine states: Recommended as indicated below. Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) 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). Patients 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) Patient-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 patients 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. The goal of physical therapy is graduation to home therapy after a certain amount of recommended sessions. The patient has already completed a course of physical therapy. The request is in excess of these recommendations per the California MTUS. There is no explanation why the patient would not be moved to home therapy after completing the recommended amount of supervised sessions. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.