

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0160861		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/06/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	02/28/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/30/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	09/08/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	09/30/2014

### 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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and is licensed to practice in California. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

### CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

According to the records made available for review, this is a 59-year-old male with a 2/28/11 date of injury. At the time (9/2/14) of request for authorization for 18 sessions of continued physical therapy for the cervical and lumbar spine, 3 times a week for 6 weeks, there is documentation of subjective complaints increasing lower back pain with bilateral lower extremity paresthesias, neck pain, and shoulder pain. The objective findings decreased shoulder strength and 1+. The current diagnoses include lumbago, lumbar stenosis, lumbar radiculopathy, and cervicgia. Treatment to date includes ongoing physical therapy to the cervical and lumbar spine (unknown amount). The number of previous physical therapy treatments cannot be determined. In addition, there is no documentation of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services as a result of physical therapy provided to date.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**18 sessions of continued physical therapy for the cervical and lumbar spine, 3 times a week for 6 weeks:** Upheld

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

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines physical medicine, Page(s): 98. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG) Neck & Upper Back; Low Back, Physical therapy

**Decision rationale:** MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines support a brief course of physical medicine for patients with chronic pain not to exceed 10 visits over 4-8 weeks with allowance for fading of treatment frequency, with transition to an active self-directed program of independent home physical medicine/therapeutic exercise. MTUS-Definitions identifies that any treatment intervention should not be continued in the absence of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services. Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) recommends a limited course of physical therapy for patients with a diagnosis of lumbar and cervical disc disorders not to exceed 10 visits over 8 weeks. ODG also notes patients should be formally assessed after a "six-visit clinical trial" to see if the patient is moving in a positive direction, no direction, or a negative direction (prior to continuing with the physical therapy) and when treatment requests exceeds guideline recommendations, the physician must provide a statement of exceptional factors to justify going outside of guideline parameters. Within the medical information available for review, there is documentation of diagnoses of lumbago, lumbar stenosis, lumbar radiculopathy, and cervicgia. In addition, there is documentation of previous physical therapy. However, there is no documentation of the number of previous physical therapy treatments and, if the number of treatments have exceeded guidelines, remaining functional deficits that would be considered exceptional factors to justify exceeding guidelines. In addition, there is no documentation of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services as a result of physical therapy provided to date. Furthermore, the proposed number of sessions exceeds guidelines. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for 18 sessions of continued physical therapy for the cervical and lumbar spine, 3 times a week for 6 weeks is not medically necessary.