MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM14-0161174		
Date Assigned:	10/06/2014	Date of Injury:	08/26/2010
Decision Date:	10/31/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/26/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/01/2014

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 Orthopedic Surgeon and is licensed to practice in Arizona. 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:

The patient is a 55-year-old female with a date of injury of 8/26/2010. As a result of repetitive trauma, the patient alleges chronic neck pain with bilateral arm pain associated with numbness in her fingers and weakness in her arms. Electrodiagnostic studies dated 8/14/2014 was interpreted as entrapment neuropathy of both elbows and chronic bilateral C5-C6 cervical radiculopathy. A progress note dated 5/13/2014, requesting a cervical epidural, states the patient has not been responsive to medication or physical therapy. There is no documentation in the record of a trial with a transcutaneous electric nerve stimulation (TENS) unit. A request is made for 8 sessions of physical therapy and purchase of a TENS unit.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Functionally-oriented therapy neck and elbow: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: The chronic pain guidelines address physical medicine associated with chronic pain. For myalgia and neuralgia they recommend up to 10 visits to physical therapy.

There is documentation in the record that the patient has not responded to physical therapy in the past. There is no documentation on a number of therapy sessions nor what criteria demonstrated no responsiveness. Also, there is no documentation that the patient was on a program of active therapy at home in the past. Supervised physical therapy needs to be associated with a home exercise program to maintain improvement levels. Therefore, since the patient has demonstrated no responsiveness to past physical therapy, the medical necessity for additional physical therapy has not been established.

Purchase of a TENS unit: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) Page(s): 116.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines transcutaneous electrotherapy Page(s): 114-121.

Decision rationale: According to the chronic pain guidelines, a TENS unit is not recommended as a primary treatment modality. However, a one month home-based TENS trial may be considered as a noninvasive conservative option, if used as an adjunct to a program of evidence-based functional restoration. There is no documentation of a trial or the results of a trial with a TENS unit. This found these to demonstrate functional improvement such as decrease in pain medication, increased function, and inability to return to work. Therefore, without a TENS unit trial or the positive results of such a trial, the medical necessity of purchasing a TENS unit has not been established.