

Case Number:	CM14-0180230		
Date Assigned:	11/04/2014	Date of Injury:	12/01/2010
Decision Date:	12/12/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/14/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/30/2014

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 a licensed Doctor of Chiropractic, has a subspecialty in Acupuncture, 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:

The injured worker is a 56 year old female who reported low back pain from injury sustained on 03/12/13. Mechanism of injury was not documented in the provided medical records. There were no diagnostic imaging reports. Patient is diagnosed with degenerative scoliosis; L3-4 and L5 listhesis and stenosis; and sacralization at L5. Patient has been treated with medication, aquatic therapy, physical therapy, chiropractic and acupuncture. Per medical notes dated 07/09/14, patient complains of low back pain which comes and goes, which increases with prolonged walking or standing, sitting and getting up constantly. Pain radiates down to the left foot. Per medical notes dated 10/01/14, patient complains of low back pain. She underwent acupuncture therapy 3X and has completed 12 sessions with 35% improvement. Since completing acupuncture her symptoms have returned. Provider requested additional 12 acupuncture sessions for low back pain. There is no assessment in the provided medical records of functional efficacy with prior acupuncture visits. Patient hasn't had any long term symptomatic or functional relief with acupuncture care. Medical reports reveal little evidence of significant changes or improvement in findings, revealing a patient who has not achieved significant objective functional improvement to warrant additional treatment.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Acupuncture x 12 sessions for the low back: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS- Section 9792.24.1 Acupuncture Medical treatment Guidelines page 8-9. "Acupuncture is used as an option when pain medication is reduced and not tolerated, it may be used as an adjunct to physical rehabilitation and/or surgical intervention to hasten functional recovery". "Time to produce function improvement: 3-6 treatments. 2) Frequency: 1-3 times per week. 3) Optimum duration: 1-2 months. Acupuncture treatments may be extended if functional improvement is documented". Patient has had prior acupuncture treatment. Per medical notes dated 10/01/14, patient complains of low back pain. She underwent acupuncture therapy 3 times and has completed 12 sessions with 35% improvement, since completing acupuncture her symptoms have returned. Provider requested additional 12 acupuncture sessions for low back pain. There is lack of evidence that prior acupuncture care was of any functional benefit. There is no assessment in the provided medical records of functional efficacy with prior acupuncture visits. Medical reports reveal little evidence of significant changes or improvement in findings, revealing a patient who has not achieved significant objective functional improvement to warrant additional treatment. Additional visits may be rendered if the patient has documented objective functional improvement. Per MTUS guidelines, Functional improvement means either a clinically significant improvement in activities of daily living or a reduction in work restrictions as measured during the history and physical exam or decrease in medication intake. Per review of evidence and guidelines, 12 acupuncture treatments are not medically necessary.