

Case Number:	CM14-0211940		
Date Assigned:	01/02/2015	Date of Injury:	04/30/2001
Decision Date:	02/27/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/09/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/17/2014

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. 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 & Rehabn, Pain Management

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 58-year-old female with an original industrial injury of April 30, 2001. The injured worker has diagnoses of carpal tunnel syndrome status post release, Dequervain's tenosynovitis status post release, and trigger finger release. The disputed issue is a request for 18 additional sessions of physical therapy. A progress note on November 14, 2014 had specified this request in the treatment plan section. The handwritten note is difficult to decipher. A utilization report on December 2, 2014 had requested the total number of previous physical therapy sessions attended, and there is documentation the worker has attended 18 session of PT already. Since there was "no substantial improvement in strength," the utilization reviewer recommended no further physical therapy.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Prospective request for 18 physical therapy sessions: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG)

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

Decision rationale: The Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines 8 C.C.R. 9792.20 - 9792.26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) Page 98-99 state the following: "Physical Medicine 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." With regard to the request for 18 sessions of physical therapy, this is clearly in excess of the Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines. The worker has documentation of 18 session of PT completed to date and should have been transitioned to self-directed home exercises. There is no indication of failure of a HEP. It is unclear what benefit the patient has had from previous physical therapy, as there is no comprehensive summary of functional gains. This request is not medically necessary.