

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0213871		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	12/31/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/07/2012
<b>Decision Date:</b>	03/03/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	12/02/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	12/22/2014

### 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: Chiropractor, Oriental Medicine

### 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 61 year old female who reported neck pain from injury sustained on 03/07/12. Mechanism of injury was not documented in the provided medical records. MRI of the cervical spine revealed C4-5 and C5-6 severe stenosis. Patient is diagnosed with cervical radiculitis, cervical disc bulge at C5-6 with severe neuroforaminal stenosis, status post cervical epidural injection with moderate relief. Patient has been treated with medication, epidural injection, physical therapy, and acupuncture. Per medical notes dated 08/08/14, patient complains of neck pain rated at 6/10 in the neck. She has had 9 sessions of physical therapy, 9 sessions of acupuncture with transient relief. Per medical notes dated 10/24/14, patient is status post cervical epidural steroid injection with 50% pain relief in the neck and 60% relief in the arms. Medication use has decreased by approximately 90%. Functional ability has increased moderately with increase in activity level and endurance. Provider requested additional 6 acupuncture treatments which were non-certified by the utilization review on 12/02/14. Therefore, the Utilization Review decision was appealed for an Independent Medical Review.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Acupuncture for the cervical spine, 6 sessions:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

**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. Provider requested additional 6 acupuncture treatments which were non-certified by the utilization review on 12/02/14. 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. Furthermore official disability guidelines do not recommend acupuncture for neck pain. Per review of evidence and guidelines, 6 acupuncture treatments are not medically necessary.