

Case Number:	CM15-0102861		
Date Assigned:	06/05/2015	Date of Injury:	05/04/2004
Decision Date:	07/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/11/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/28/2015

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: New York, Tennessee
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Emergency 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 57 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 5/4/2004. The mechanism of injury is unknown. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar 4-5 fusion with subsequent hardware removal, lumbar 3-4 decompression and fusion, failed back syndrome, left lumbosacral radiculopathy and chronic pain syndrome. Lumbar x rays showed a solid lumbar 3-4 fusion. Treatment to date has included surgery, physical therapy, epidural steroid injection, lumbosacral corset and medication management. In a progress note dated 4/22/2015, the injured worker complains of pain, numbness and tingling in the left lower extremity, low back achiness and pain to the upper back. Physical examination showed lumbar tenderness. The treating physician is requesting 18 visits of physical therapy to the lower back.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy 3x6 low back: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 98-99.

Decision rationale: Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that there is no high-grade scientific evidence to support the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of passive physical modalities such as traction, heat/cold applications, massage, diathermy, TENS units, ultrasound, laser treatment, or biofeedback. They can provide short-term relief during the early phases of treatment. Active treatment is associated with better outcomes and can be managed as a home exercise program with supervision. ODG states that physical therapy is more effective in short-term follow up. 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). When treatment duration and/or number of visits exceed the guideline, exceptional factors should be noted. Recommended number of visits for myalgia and myositis is 9-10 visits over 8 weeks; and for neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis is 8-10 visits over 4 weeks. In this case the requested number of 12 visits surpasses the number of six recommended for clinical trial to determine functional improvement. The request is not medically necessary.