

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0018725		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	02/06/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	07/24/2003
<b>Decision Date:</b>	03/25/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	01/05/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/02/2015

### 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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

### 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 (IW) is a 46 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 07/24/2003. She has reported neck pain. Diagnoses include cervical spondylosis and cervicgia and degeneration of lumbar/lumbosacral disc. Treatments to date have included medications, physical therapy, and epidural steroid injections. A progress note from the treating provider dated 12/23/2014 indicates an assessment of the cervical spine range of motion that showed it was minimally limited in flexion, slightly more flexible on the right side than the left in lateral bending as well as -1 in extension. The lumbar spine is limited at -2 in flexion and extension is -2. There was a degree of left greater than right lumbosacral region discomfort with some radiation into the posterior thigh. Strength and reflexes are normal and symmetric throughout the upper and lower extremities. The treatment plan included physical therapy for cervical radiculopathy. On 01/05/2015 Utilization Review non-certified a request for Physical therapy 2 times a week times 6 weeks noting the IW had prior physical therapy and training in a home exercise program, and there was no documentation that would justify further physical therapy sessions as medically necessary. The ACOEM Guidelines Chapter 12, Low Back Complaints were cited.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Physical therapy 2 times a week times 6 weeks:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, pages 98-99.

**Decision rationale:** Physical therapy is considered medically necessary when the services require the judgment, knowledge, and skills of a qualified physical therapist due to the complexity and sophistication of the therapy and the physical condition of the patient. However, there is no clear measurable evidence of progress with the PT treatment already rendered including milestones of increased ROM, strength, and functional capacity. Review of submitted physician reports show no evidence of functional benefit, unchanged chronic symptom complaints, clinical findings, and functional status. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for 9-10 visits of physical therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It appears the employee has received significant therapy sessions without demonstrated evidence of functional improvement to allow for additional therapy treatments. There is no report of acute flare-up, new injuries, or change in symptom or clinical findings to support for formal PT in a patient that has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic injury. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support further physical therapy when prior treatment rendered has not resulted in any functional benefit. The physical therapy is not medically necessary and appropriate.