

Case Number:	CM15-0018946		
Date Assigned:	02/06/2015	Date of Injury:	07/17/2013
Decision Date:	03/25/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/26/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	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:

This male sustained an industrial injury on 7/2/13, with subsequent ongoing low back pain. Magnetic resonance imaging lumbar spine showed lumbar stenosis at L4-5 and degenerative disc disease. Treatment included physical therapy, epidural steroid injections and medications. In the most recent PR-2 dated 10/27/14, the injured worker reported 80% relief of pain since an epidural steroid injection on 9/22/14. The injured worker still complained of some discomfort in his back and tightness in his buttocks. Physical exam was remarkable for some limitations in lumbar range of motion, especially with flexion and extension without sensory or motor deficits. Straight leg raise was negative. The physician noted that the injured worker was walking more straight and upright. Current diagnoses included L4-5 lumbar spinal stenosis and lumbar disc herniation with lumbar radiculopathy. The treatment plan included physical therapy to serve as a work hardening program as well as optimizing the gains he has enjoyed from the epidural steroid injection. On 12/26/14, Utilization Review noncertified a request for physical therapy for the lumbar spine- 12 visits noting lack of documentation of significant functional deficits and previous physical therapy and efficacy. As a result of the UR denial, an IMR was filed with the Division of Workers Comp.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy for the lumbar spine- 12 visits: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Treatment Index, 2014, Pain (Chronic & Acute), Physical Medicine Treatment

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 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.