

Case Number:	CM15-0115763		
Date Assigned:	06/24/2015	Date of Injury:	11/27/2013
Decision Date:	07/23/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/16/2015

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 is a 31 year old female with an industrial injury dated 11/27/2013. The mechanism of injury is documented as pushing a bucket into an elevator when her right knee hit the edge of the bucket. Her diagnosis is pain in joint lower leg. Prior treatment included physical therapy, right knee surgery, functional restoration program, and medications. She presents on 05/29/2015 with lower back and left ankle pain. She states physical therapy has been very beneficial. She reports improved range of motion in her left ankle as well as reduced pain. She states the physical therapy has focused on her alignment and posture which has reduced her back pain. She currently rates her ankle pain as 6/10. She also complains of right knee pain. Physical exam revealed normal muscle tone without atrophy in bilateral upper and lower extremities. Ankle strength testing was painful. There was spasm and guarding of the lumbar spine. Treatment plan included medications (Protonix and Relafen) and 6 sessions of physical therapy. The treatment request is for physical therapy for the right knee (6 treatments).

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy for the right knee (6 treatments): Upheld

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

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 had previous therapy and participated in a functional restoration program and 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 for the right knee (6 treatments) is not medically necessary or appropriate.