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| <b>Case Number:</b>   | CM15-0117548 |                              |            |
| <b>Date Assigned:</b> | 06/25/2015   | <b>Date of Injury:</b>       | 08/27/2003 |
| <b>Decision Date:</b> | 07/24/2015   | <b>UR Denial Date:</b>       | 05/27/2015 |
| <b>Priority:</b>      | Standard     | <b>Application Received:</b> | 06/18/2015 |

### 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 60-year-old male who sustained an industrial injury on 08/27/2003. Diagnoses include L3-S1 disc protrusions and facet arthropathy with relief from lumbar RFAs; C5-6 moderate right foraminal narrowing and C6-7 moderate central and severe right foraminal narrowing with right C7 radiculopathy; severe reactive depression; chronic pain; possible thoracic outlet syndrome; right upper extremity chronic regional pain syndrome and cervical myofascial pain. Treatment to date has included medications, previous physical therapy, cervical epidural injections, radiofrequency ablations (RFAs) of the lumbar medial branch nerves and home exercise program. According to the progress notes dated 2/25/15, the IW reported the bilateral L3 through L5 RFAs performed on 12/30/14 were successful and he was not taking any pain medications. He complained of pain over the left sacroiliac joint and neck pain, rated 7/10. He stated the pain was primarily in the right trapezius and periscapular region. He reported he could stand or sit for one hour and walk for 30 minutes. On examination, there was tenderness over the left sacroiliac joint and more acutely over the bilateral trapezius muscles. Trigger points were present. A request was made for physical therapy-eight (8) visits.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Physical therapy for 8 visits:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Neck & Upper Back, Physical Therapy 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 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 for 8 visits is not medically necessary and appropriate.