

Case Number:	CM15-0119892		
Date Assigned:	06/30/2015	Date of Injury:	08/15/2011
Decision Date:	07/29/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/22/2015

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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 68-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 08/15/2011. Mechanism of injury was cumulative trauma to multiple body parts. Diagnoses include musculoligamentous sprain of the cervical spine with upper extremity radiculopathy, cervical disc bulges, over use syndrome of both upper extremities, carpal tunnel syndrome of both wrists, DeQuervain's tendinitis of bilateral wrists, medial epicondylitis of bilateral elbows, possible ulnar neuritis of the left elbow, full thickness tear of the right shoulder rotator cuff, tendinitis of the right shoulder, and mild osteoarthritis of the acromioclavicular joint of the right shoulder. Comorbidities include hypertension, Sjogren's syndrome and hyperlipidemia. The injured worker is not working. Her medications listed include Advil. Treatment to date has included diagnostic studies, medications, physical therapy which has helped in the past, wrist brace, IMAK Smart glove, and a home exercise program. A physician progress notes dated 06/03/2015 documents the injured worker does not have neck pain at this time, and she indicated a seldom- tolerable pain at times. She has slight stiffness in the morning in her both wrists. She has no elbow pain at this time and she has slight very seldom pain in her right shoulder. There is a positive crank testing in her right shoulder. She indicates that having therapy helped with the pain and she is continuing to do the exercises at home. These are all improvements since her last physician visit. The treatment plan includes a return visit in 6- to 8 weeks, continued use of wrist immobilizers, continued use of IMAK Smart Glove to bilateral wrists, and awaiting authorization of Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the cervical spine to rule out disc herniation. Treatment requested is for physical therapy (to include massage/ occasional use of heat prior to exercises) 2 times a week for 8 sessions.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy (to include massage/ occasional use of heat prior to exercises) 2 times a week for 8 sessions: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Guidelines.

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

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on physical medicine states: Recommended as indicated below. Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) can provide short term relief during the early phases of pain treatment and are directed at controlling symptoms such as pain, inflammation and swelling and to improve the rate of healing soft tissue injuries. They can be used sparingly with active therapies to help control swelling, pain and inflammation during the rehabilitation process. Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function, range of motion, and can alleviate discomfort. Active therapy requires an internal effort by the individual to complete a specific exercise or task. This form of therapy may require supervision from a therapist or medical provider such as verbal, visual and/or tactile instruction(s). Patients are instructed and expected to continue active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. Home exercise can include exercise with or without mechanical assistance or resistance and functional activities with assistive devices. (Colorado, 2002) (Airaksinen, 2006) Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. (Li, 2005) The use of active treatment modalities (e.g., exercise, education, activity modification) instead of passive treatments is associated with substantially better clinical outcomes. In a large case series of patients with low back pain treated by physical therapists, those adhering to guidelines for active rather than passive treatments incurred fewer treatment visits, cost less, and had less pain and less disability. The overall success rates were 64.7% among those adhering to the active treatment recommendations versus 36.5% for passive treatment. (Fritz, 2007) Physical Medicine Guidelines: Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine. Myalgia and myositis, unspecified (ICD9 729.1): 9-10 visits over 8 weeks. Neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis, unspecified (ICD9 729.2) 8-10 visits over 4 weeks Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (CRPS) (ICD9 337.2):24 visits over 16 weeks. The requested amount of physical therapy is in excess of California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines. The patient has already completed a course of physical therapy. There is no objective explanation why the patient would need excess physical therapy and not be transitioned to active self-directed physical medicine. The request is not medically necessary.