

Case Number:	CM15-0120963		
Date Assigned:	07/01/2015	Date of Injury:	07/15/2012
Decision Date:	07/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/17/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/23/2015

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 36 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 07/15/2012, secondary to pushing furniture at work resulting in bilateral knee injury. On provider visit dated 06/09/2015 the injured worker has reported bilateral knee and low back pain. On examination of the injured worker was noted to be walking with a limp, straight leg raise was positive for back pain and pain with range of motion was noted as well in the back. The diagnoses have included recurrent low back pain with right leg paresthesia, weakness, diminished sensation and reflexes. Treatment to date has included medication, physical therapy and home exercise program. The injured worker was noted not to be working. The provider requested TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) or H-wave unit, for home use and additional physical therapy for low back for HEP (home exercise program), 3 sessions.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) or H-wave unit, for home use: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Transcutaneous electrotherapy; TENS, chronic pain (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation)
Page(s): 114-116.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Transcutaneous Electrotherapy, TENS for chronic pain, pages 114-117.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines, ongoing treatment is not advisable if there are no signs of objective progress and functional restoration has not been demonstrated. Specified criteria for the use of TENS Unit include trial in conjunction to ongoing treatment modalities within the functional restoration approach as appropriate for documented chronic intractable pain of at least three months duration with failed evidence of other appropriate pain modalities tried such as medication. From the submitted reports, the patient has received extensive conservative medical treatment to include chronic analgesics and other medication, extensive physical therapy, activity modifications, yet the patient has remained symptomatic and functionally impaired. There is no documentation on how or what TENS or H-wave unit is requested, whether this is for rental or purchase, nor is there any documented short-term or long-term goals of treatment with the TENS unit. There is no evidence for change in functional status, increased in ADLs, decreased VAS score, medication usage, or treatment utilization from the treatment already rendered for this chronic injury of 2012. The TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) or H-wave unit, for home use is not medically necessary and appropriate.

Additional Physical Therapy for Low Back for HEP (home exercise program), 3 sessions:
Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 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 has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic injury of 2012. 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 Additional Physical Therapy for Low Back for HEP (home exercise program), 3 sessions is not medically necessary and appropriate.

