

Case Number:	CM15-0122301		
Date Assigned:	07/06/2015	Date of Injury:	10/02/2006
Decision Date:	07/31/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/24/2015

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: New Jersey, Alabama, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular Medicine

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 52 year old male patient who sustained an industrial injury on 10/02/2006. The worker was employed as a drywall finisher and on the day of injury he fell while tapering firewalls from a scaffold 10 feet above the ground with resulting injury. A recent primary treating office visit dated 06/05/2015 reported subjective complaints of continuing to improve with therapy. The following diagnoses were applied: status post right rotator cuff repair; status post excision of right carpal tunnel cyst; status post revision left rotator cuff repair with excision of distal clavicle; status post right carpal tunnel release; cervical and lumbar strain/sprain. The plan of care noted continuing with physical therapy, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents. The following medications were dispensed: Voltaren, Prilosec, and Tramadol ER. His current complaints were of having low back pain. He is currently attending physical therapy. Current medications were: Ketoprofen, Naproxen, and Gabapentin.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

12 Physical therapy visits: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 98.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Physical Medicine is 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) In this case, the patient underwent 24 sessions of post-op physical therapy. According to the progress report dated June 5, 2015, the patient continues to show improvement with regard to pain and function since he started physical therapy. However, the guidelines recommend a maximum of 30 sessions over 18 weeks. Therefore, the request for 12 physical therapy visits is not medically necessary.