

Case Number:	CM15-0123221		
Date Assigned:	07/07/2015	Date of Injury:	04/02/2014
Decision Date:	07/31/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/23/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/25/2015

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 48 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 4/2/14. Initial complaint was a back injury. The injured worker was diagnosed as having with L4-5 degenerative disc disease; mechanical low back pain with intermittent left leg pain complaints. Treatment to date has included physical therapy (x24); medications. Currently, the PR-2 notes dated 6/15/15 indicated the injured worker presents on this day for her work-related injury resulting in a L4-5 disc bulge with back and lower extremity radiculopathy. She reports she has unfortunately been terminated from her position and states continuing ongoing back and left buttock and thigh pain complaints. She has exhausted 24 physical therapy visits and was hoping to get more visits which have not been authorized. She is taking Tramadol, Flexeril and using Lidocaine patches intermittently for her back and left leg pain. She has decided to pursue physical therapy through her outside insurance and presents today for an evaluation. The provider notes on physical examination, her flexion is to 40 degrees, extension to 20-30 degrees, with minimal tenderness with flexion and extension. Lower extremity exam reveals full sensation at L1-S1 and full 5/5 iliopsoas, quad, TA, EHL and gastroc-soleus. He has diagnosed her with L4-5 degenerative disc disease, mechanical low back pain with intermittent left leg pain complaints. The provider's treatment plan included physical therapy and evaluation for the lumbar spine 12 sessions.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy and evaluation 1x12 (lumbar): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Low 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 with at least 24 visits 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 and evaluation 1x12 (lumbar) is not medically necessary and appropriate.