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| Case Number: | CM15-0124420 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 07/15/2015 | Date of Injury: | 10/28/2013 |
| Decision Date: | 08/10/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 06/04/2015 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 06/29/2015 |

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 52 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on October 28, 2013. She has reported neck pain and right upper extremity pain status post C4-C5 anterior cervical decompression and fusion. Diagnosis includes cervicalgia, cervical stenosis, and cervical radiculopathy. Treatment has included injection, medical imaging, splinting, a home exercise program, physical therapy, and acupuncture. There decreased pinprick in the right C6 and C7 distribution on the right hand. The injured worker had diminished right biceps and brachioradialis reflex at 1 plus compared to 2 plus on the left side. The treatment request included physical therapy to the cervical neck, 16 sessions.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical Therapy to cervical neck 2x week x 8 weeks for 16 sessions: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 99.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, pages 98-99.

Decision rationale: Time-limited care plan with specific defined goals, assessment of functional benefit with modification of ongoing treatment based upon the patient's progress in meeting those goals and the provider's continued monitoring of successful outcome is stressed by MTUS guidelines. 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. Submitted reports have no acute flare-up or specific physical limitations to support for physical/ occupational therapy. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for 9-10 visits of therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It is unclear how many PT sessions have been completed; however, the submitted reports have not identified clear specific functional improvement in ADLs, functional status, or decrease in medication and medical utilization nor have there been a change in neurological compromise or red-flag findings demonstrated from the formal physical therapy already rendered to support further treatment. The Physical Therapy to cervical neck 2x week x 8 weeks for 16 sessions is not medically necessary and appropriate.