

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0125611		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	07/10/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	01/20/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	08/05/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	05/27/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	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 (IW) is a 40-year-old male who sustained an industrial injury on 01/20/2014. Diagnoses include cervical, thoracic and lumbar strain with myofascial pain and L4-5 and L5-S1 disc protrusions with bilateral L5-S1 foraminal narrowing. Treatment to date has included medications, physical therapy, and acupuncture, epidural steroid injections, trigger point injections, massage therapy and chiropractic treatment. According to the progress notes dated 3/9/15, the IW reported the trigger point injections he received on 2/19/15 gave him 20% pain relief in the upper periscapular region and the ones in the lumbar area and below had no effect. On examination, there was tenderness along the paraspinal muscles and in the iliolumbar and sacroiliac regions. Range of motion was painful and trigger points were identified. An MRI of the lumbosacral spine from 8/4/14 showed broad-based L5-S1 disc protrusion with facet degeneration and a small L4-5 disc protrusion with bilateral L5-S1 foraminal narrowing. A request was made for eight additional physical therapy visits, twice weekly for four weeks, for the lumbar spine due to lack of other helpful therapies.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Eight (8) additional physical therapy visits 2 times per week for 4 weeks for lumbar spine:**  
Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 98-99.

**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 January 2014. 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 Eight (8) additional physical therapy visits 2 times per week for 4 weeks for lumbar spine is not medically necessary and appropriate.