

Case Number:	CM15-0126684		
Date Assigned:	07/15/2015	Date of Injury:	11/16/2011
Decision Date:	08/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/30/2015

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 35 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on November 16, 2011. The initial symptoms reported by the injured worker are unknown. The injured worker was diagnosed as having left lumbar radiculopathy/lumbar sacral neuritis, lumbar spondylosis, degenerative lumbosacral spine/disc/facet disease and severe low back and left leg pain. An operative report dated March 2, 2015, included the preoperative diagnosis noted as failed conservative therapies for pain control. Treatment to date has included diagnostic studies, surgery, epidural injection, chiropractic treatment and medications. On March 18, 2015, the injured worker complained of persistent low back pain with spasms along with pain in his left hip and lateral thigh. He stated that it is most difficult to arise from sitting to standing. The treatment plan included a course of postoperative physical therapy twice a week for six weeks, consultation with a urologist, medications and a follow-up visit. On June 15, 2015, Utilization Review non-certified the request for physical therapy utilizing pool exercises two times six weeks for the bilateral low back area, citing California MTUS Guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical Therapy utilizing pool exercises for the bilateral low back area, twice a week for six weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Aquatic Therapy.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Aquatic therapy Page(s): 22.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, aquatic therapy is "recommended as an optional form of exercise therapy, where available, as an alternative to land based physical therapy. Aquatic therapy (including swimming) can minimize the effects of gravity, so it is specifically recommended where reduced weight bearing is desirable, for example extreme obesity. For recommendations on the number of supervised visits, see Physical medicine. Water exercise improved some components of health-related quality of life, balance, and stair climbing in females with fibromyalgia, but regular exercise and higher intensities maybe required to preserve most of these gains. (Tomas-Carus, 2007)" There no clear evidence that the patient has difficulty performing land based physical therapy or the need for the reduction of weight bearing to improve the patient ability to perform particular exercise regimen. There is no documentation for a clear benefit expected from Aquatic therapy. In addition, there is no documentation as to why the patient cannot perform home exercises. Therefore, the request for physical therapy utilizing pool exercises for the bilateral low back area, twice a week for six weeks is not medically necessary.