

Case Number:	CM15-0128262		
Date Assigned:	07/15/2015	Date of Injury:	02/14/2012
Decision Date:	08/11/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/16/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/03/2015

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: Preventive Medicine, Occupational 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 48 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 2/14/2012. He reported developed progressively severe back pain from repeated activity. Diagnoses include lumbago, lumbago discopathy, and status post lumbar fusion, and hypertension. Treatments to date include medication therapy, physical therapy and epidural steroid injections. Currently, he complained of pain in the low back and hips and difficulty sleeping. On 4/22/15, the physical examination documented decreased lumbar range of motion and guarding, tenderness and muscle spasms. The appeal request was to authorize eight acupuncture treatments and eight chiropractic treatments.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

8 Acupuncture treatments for the Lumbar Spine: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: The MTUS Guidelines recommend the use of acupuncture in the treatment of chronic pain to improve function. The recommended time to produce functional improvement is 3 to 6 sessions at a frequency of 1 to 3 times per week over 1 to 2 months. Additional treatments may be necessary if there is documented functional improvement as a result to the trial of 3 to 6 sessions. In this case, the injured worker has reported that previous acupuncture treatments actually made his pain worse. Additionally, he has experience worsening range-of-motion and work restrictions since acupuncture treatments began. The request for 8 acupuncture treatments for the lumbar spine is therefore not medically necessary.

8 Chiropractic Treatments to the Lumbar Spine: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Manual Therapy & Manipulation Section Page(s): 58-61.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines, chiropractic care consisting of manual therapy and manipulation for the low back is recommended for chronic pain if caused by musculoskeletal conditions. Manual therapy is widely used in the treatment of musculoskeletal pain. The intended goal or effect is the achievement of positive symptomatic or objective measurable gains in functional improvement that facilitate progression in the patient's therapeutic exercise program and return to productive activities. A therapeutic trial of 6 visits over 2 weeks is recommended. If there is evidence of objective functional improvement, a total of up to 18 visits over 6 to 8 weeks is recommended. Elective or maintenance care is not recommended. Recurrences or flare-ups should be evaluated for treatment success, and if return to work is achieved, 1-2 visits every 4-6 months is reasonable. In this case, the injured worker has reported that his condition has become worse with the prior use of chiropractic therapy, therefore, the request for 8 chiropractic treatments to the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.