MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0149284		
Date Assigned:	08/11/2015	Date of Injury:	11/08/1978
Decision Date:	10/28/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/21/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/30/2015

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: Texas, New York, 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 applicant is a represented 67-year-old who has filed a claim for paraplegia reportedly associated with an industrial injury of November 8, 1978. In a Utilization Review report dated July 22, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for a transport van fully converted for wheelchair access. The Utilization Reviewer stated that the equipping and/or converting the claimant's van for wheelchair access was solely an administrative or legal issue and outside the purview of the Utilization Review. The applicant and/or applicant's attorney appealed. In a letter dated July 31, 2015, the applicant contended that he was requesting that the claims administrator cover the cost of installing a wheelchair ramp. The applicant stated that he was not seeking authorization for a van. The applicant seemingly suggested that he already had a van and that he wished for the claims administrator to equip said van for wheelchair access via a ramp. In a hospital discharge summary dated August 12, 2014, it was stated that the applicant had known issues with paraplegia associated with a T12 spinal cord injury. The applicant also had superimposed issues including a UTI, it was acknowledged. In an Emergency Department report dated August 11, 2014, it was again reported that the applicant had been paralyzed from his waist down following a spinal cord injury in 1978. In a July 13, 2015 progress note, the applicant presented for follow-up on known issues with paraplegia. The applicant was having difficulty entering and egressing his car, it was reported owing to difficulty disassembling the wheelchair each and every time he got in and out of the car. The applicant reported worsening leg contractures on this date.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Transport van fully converted for wheelchair access: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS).

Decision rationale: Yes, the request for conversion and/or equipping the applicant's van for wheelchair access was medically necessary, medically appropriate, and indicated here. As noted on page 40 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, part and parcel of treatment for complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS) or, by analogy, the paraplegia present here, includes "normalization of use" via assessment and/or modifications at home, work, and by implication, the claimant's van, i.e., the article at issue here. Here, the claimant was described as having longstanding issues with paraplegia associated with a T12 spinal cord injury sustained in 1978. The claimant was described as paraplegic. The claimant was having difficulty getting in and out of his van, it was reported on July 13, 2015. The claimant contended in a faxed letter dated July 31, 2015 that he simply wished for the claims administrator to equip his van for a facile wheelchair access and that he was not seeking authorization for purchase of a van but, rather, was seeking authorization for provision of said van with a more facile wheelchair access. This was indicated, given the claimant's issues with paraplegia associated with a T12 spinal cord injury. Therefore, the request was medically necessary.