

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0174444		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/16/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	07/30/2007
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/16/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/25/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	09/04/2015

### 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, Oregon, Washington  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Orthopedic Surgery

### 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 53-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 7-30-07. The injured worker is undergoing treatment for a traumatic brain injury, gait ataxia, anoxic encephalopathy and bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. Medical records dated 4-14-15 through 6-30-15 and signed 8-17-15 indicate the injured worker complains of bilateral shoulder pain with numbness from the shoulders to hands. Physical exam dated 6-30-15 notes bilateral hand decreased strength, full range of motion (ROM) and positive Phalen's and Tinel's sign. Progress note dated 4-14-15 indicates wrist-hand pain is exacerbated by use of a cane for ambulation. Treatment to date has included electromyogram (6-19-15) indicating left carpal tunnel syndrome and medication. The original utilization review dated 8-25-15 indicates the request for carpal tunnel surgery left wrist, application of forearm splint and post-operative physical therapy (12-sessions) for the left wrist is non-certified.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Carpal tunnel surgery left wrist: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Forearm, Wrist, and Hand Complaints 2004. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (Acute & Chronic)/ Carpal tunnel release surgery (CTR).

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Forearm, Wrist, and Hand Complaints 2004, Section(s): Surgical Considerations.

**Decision rationale:** Per the CA MTUS/ACOEM guidelines, electrodiagnostic testing is required to evaluate for carpal tunnel and stratify success in carpal tunnel release. In addition, the guidelines recommend splinting and medications as well as a cortisone injection to help facilitate diagnosis. In this case, there is lack of evidence of failed bracing or injections in the records. The Official Disability Guidelines were also referenced for more specific recommendations. According to the Official Disability Guidelines surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome is recommended after an accurate diagnosis of moderate or severe CTS. Surgery is not generally initially indicated for mild CTS unless symptoms persist after conservative treatment. Severe CTS requires all of the following: Muscle atrophy, severe weakness of thenar muscles, 2-point discrimination test greater than 6 mm and positive electrodiagnostic testing. Not severe CTS requires all the following: Symptoms of pain, numbness, paresthesia, impaired dexterity requiring two of the following: Abnormal Katz hand diagram scores, nocturnal symptoms, Flick sign (shaking hand); findings by physical exam, requiring two of the following including compression test, Semmes-Weinstein monofilament test, Phalen's sign, Tinel's sign, decreased 2-point discrimination, mild thenar weakness, (thumb adduction); comorbidities of no current pregnancy; initial conservative treatment requiring three of the following: Activity modification greater than or equal to one month, night wrist splint greater than or equal to one month, nonprescription analgesia (i.e. acetaminophen), home exercise training (provided by physician, healthcare provider or therapist) or successful initial outcome from corticosteroid injection trial (optional) and positive electrodiagnostic testing. In this case, there is insufficient evidence of carpal tunnel syndrome and failure of conservative management as stated above. There is insufficient evidence of abnormal hand diagram scores, nocturnal symptoms, decreased two-point discrimination or thenar weakness to warrant surgery. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.

**Application of forearm splint:** Upheld

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

**MAXIMUS guideline:** The Expert Reviewer did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

**Decision rationale:** Since the primary procedure is not medically necessary, none of the associated services are medically necessary.

**Post op physical therapy (12-sessions for the left wrist):** Upheld

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

**MAXIMUS guideline:** The Expert Reviewer did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

**Decision rationale:** Since the primary procedure is not medically necessary, none of the associated services are medically necessary.