

Case Number:	CM15-0178016		
Date Assigned:	09/18/2015	Date of Injury:	05/19/2014
Decision Date:	10/21/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/20/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/10/2015

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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 57 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 5-19-2014. The injured worker is being treated for chronic low back pain, lumbar degenerative disc disease, lumbar discogenic pain, possible lumbar radiculitis, thoracic pain, neck pain, cervical degenerative disc disease, cervical facet pain, cervical foraminal stenosis and myalgia. Treatment to date has included medications, injections, diagnostics, home exercise and physical therapy. Per the Primary Treating Physician's Progress Report dated 8-12-2015, the injured worker presented for reevaluation of migraines, right elbow, neck, mid and low back pain. He has noticed increased range of motion after cervical facet injections at right C2-3 and C3-4. He is now having a lot of left sided neck pain. He reports stabbing pain in the trapezius, neck and mid back with numbness in the right upper extremity. He rates the pain as 8-9 out of 10 without medications and 5-6 out of 10 with medications. Objective findings included intact sensation but slightly decreased over the left upper extremity. There was tenderness to the cervical and thoracic paraspinals, facet joints at left C3-4 and C-5, and trigger point tenderness at T4-5 and T5-6. Range of motion was reduced in all planes. The plan of care included medications, follow-up care, specialist referral, diagnostics including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), ice application, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), and a Functional Restoration Program (FRP). Authorization was requested on 8-13-2015 for FRP. On 8-20-2015, Utilization Review non-certified the request for FRP, citing lack of medical necessity.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Functional Restoration Program: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Functional restoration programs (FRPs).

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on functional restoration programs states: Recommended, although research is still ongoing as to how to most appropriately screen for inclusion in these programs. Functional restoration programs (FRPs), a type of treatment included in the category of interdisciplinary pain programs (see Chronic pain programs), were originally developed by Mayer and Gatchel. FRPs were designed to use a medically directed, interdisciplinary pain management approach geared specifically to patients with chronic disabling occupational musculoskeletal disorders. These programs emphasize the importance of function over the elimination of pain. FRPs incorporate components of exercise progression with disability management and psychosocial intervention. Long-term evidence suggests that the benefit of these programs diminishes over time, but still remains positive when compared to cohorts that did not receive an intensive program. (Bendix, 1998) A Cochrane review suggests that there is strong evidence that intensive multidisciplinary rehabilitation with functional restoration reduces pain and improves function of patients with low back pain. The evidence is contradictory when evaluating the programs in terms of vocational outcomes. (Guzman 2001) It must be noted that all studies used for the Cochrane review excluded individuals with extensive radiculopathy, and several of the studies excluded patients who were receiving a pension, limiting the generalizability of the above results. Studies published after the Cochrane review also indicate that intensive programs show greater effectiveness, in particular in terms of return to work, than less intensive treatment. (Airaksinen, 2006) There appears to be little scientific evidence for the effectiveness of multidisciplinary biopsychosocial rehabilitation compared with other rehabilitation facilities for neck and shoulder pain, as opposed to low back pain and generalized pain syndromes. (Karjalainen, 2003) Treatment is not suggested for longer than 2 weeks without evidence of demonstrated efficacy as documented by subjective and objective gains. For general information, see Chronic pain programs. While functional restoration programs are recommended per the California MTUS, the length of time is for 2 weeks unless there is documentation of demonstrated efficacy by subjective and objective gains. The request is for an unspecified amount of time and therefore cannot be certified, as it does not meet guideline recommendations. The request is not medically necessary.