

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0062865		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/08/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	01/28/1993
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/11/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	04/01/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	04/02/2015

### 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, Michigan, 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 56-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury on January 28, 1993. The diagnoses have included rotator cuff syndrome, medial epicondylitis of the elbow bilateral, bilateral shoulder tendonitis and impingement and carpal tunnel syndrome. Treatment to date has included medications, radiological studies, a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit, a home exercise program, left elbow and wrist surgery, right shoulder surgery and bilateral trigger thumb release. Current documentation dated March 2, 2015 notes that the injured worker reported increasing left elbow pain and numbness that ran from her elbow to the shoulder. She also noted bilateral shoulder pain and stiffness. Shoulder examination revealed a full but painful elevation bilaterally. There was slight pain with rotator cuff loading bilaterally. The documentation notes that the injured worker had a flare-up of elbow pain related to medial epicondylitis. The treating physician recommended a course of physical therapy. The documentation notes that the injured worker had chronic shoulder tendinitis, which would flare-up and have to be treated in the course of rehabilitation therapy for the elbow. The treating physician's plan of care included a request for physical therapy for the elbow and shoulders # 12.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**12 sessions of physical therapy for elbow and shoulders:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 9 Shoulder Complaints, Chapter 10 Elbow Disorders (Revised 2007), Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines physical medicine, Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Harris J, Occupational Medicine Practice Guidelines, 2nd Edition (2004) - pp. 201-205Hegmann K, Occupational Medicine Practice Guidelines, 2nd Edition (2008 Revision) - pp. 555-556, 588, 598, Official Disability Guidelines-Treatment in Workers' Compensation, Shoulder / Elbow/ Low Back Chapter (Acute and Chronic) last updated on 02/27/15.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 98.

**Decision rationale:** According to MTUS guidelines, Physical Medicine is "Recommended as indicated below. Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) can provide short-term relief during the early phases of pain treatment and are directed at controlling symptoms such as pain, inflammation and swelling and to improve the rate of healing soft tissue injuries. They can be used sparingly with active therapies to help control swelling, pain and inflammation during the rehabilitation process. Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function, range of motion, and can alleviate discomfort. Active therapy requires an internal effort by the individual to complete a specific exercise or task. This form of therapy may require supervision from a therapist or medical provider such as verbal, visual and/or tactile instruction(s). Patients are instructed and expected to continue active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. Home exercise can include exercise with or without mechanical assistance or resistance and functional activities with assistive devices. (Colorado, 2002) (Airaksinen, 2006) Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. (Li, 2005) The use of active treatment modalities (e.g., exercise, education, activity modification) instead of passive treatments is associated with substantially better clinical outcomes. In a large case series of patients with low back pain treated by physical therapists, those adhering to guidelines for active rather than passive treatments incurred fewer treatment visits, cost less, and had less pain and less disability. The overall success rates were 64.7% among those adhering to the active treatment recommendations versus 36.5% for passive treatment. (Fritz, 2007)" There is no documentation on the amount, efficacy, and outcome of previous physical therapy sessions. There is no documentation that the patient cannot perform or failed home exercise program. Therefore, the request for 12 sessions of physical therapy for elbow and shoulders is not medically necessary.