

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0069936		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/17/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/19/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/18/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	04/08/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	04/13/2015

### 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, Alabama, 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 67 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on September 19, 2011. The injured worker's initial complaints and diagnoses are not included in the provided documentation. The injured worker was diagnosed as having an unspecified internal derangement of the knee, disturbance of skin sensation, and chronic pain syndrome. Diagnostics to date has included MRIs and x-rays. Treatment to date has included activity and work modifications, a cane, bilateral knee steroid injections, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory and pain medications. On March 10, 2015, the treating physician noted the injured worker had gone to an emergency room for bilateral knee pain in January, and recently in March for left knee pain. He had a knee problem due to inability to use his cane due right wrist pain. There was documentation of physical exam findings of the bilateral knees. The treatment plan includes physical therapy for bilateral knees.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Physical Therapy 12 visits, bilateral knees:** Upheld

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

**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). The frequency of the treatment should be reduced from 12 to 6 or less sessions. More sessions will be considered when functional and objective improvement are documented. Therefore, the request for 12 physical therapy sessions, bilateral knees is not medically necessary.