

Case Number:	CM15-0070612		
Date Assigned:	04/20/2015	Date of Injury:	03/02/2014
Decision Date:	07/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/17/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/14/2015

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, Florida, 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 injured worker is a year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on March 2, 2014, injuring her left elbow. She was diagnosed with left lateral epicondylitis. Treatment included a steroid injection, physical therapy, occupational therapy, home exercise program, cryotherapy, electrical stimulation, work restrictions and modifications. Currently, the injured worker complained of persistent left elbow pain, stiffness and weakness that interfere with her activities of daily living. She complained of sharp, shooting, burning pain into her left elbow when reaching. Mild atrophy was noted on examination of the left forearm. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization included post-operative occupational therapy for the left forearm.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

POST-OP OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY 2XWK X 6WKS LEFT FOREARM QTY 12:
 Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines PHYSICAL MEDICINE.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines
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Decision rationale: This claimant was injured over a year ago, with a left lateral epicondylitis. Treatment included a steroid injection, physical therapy, occupational therapy, home exercise program, cryotherapy, electrical stimulation, work restrictions and modifications. The left elbow pain is persistent. Mild atrophy was noted on examination of the left forearm. More therapy is requested. The MTUS does permit physical therapy in chronic situations, noting that one should allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine. The conditions mentioned are Myalgia and myositis, unspecified (ICD9 729.1): 9-10 visits over 8 weeks; Neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis, unspecified (ICD9 729.2) 8-10 visits over 4 weeks; and Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (CRPS) (ICD9 337.2): 24 visits over 16 weeks. This claimant does not have these conditions. In addition, after several documented sessions of therapy, it is not clear why the patient would not be independent with self-care at this point. Also, there are especially strong caveats in the MTUS/ACOEM guidelines against over treatment in the chronic situation supporting the clinical notion that the move to independence and an active, independent home program is clinically in the best interest of the patient. They cite: Although mistreating or under treating pain is of concern, an even greater risk for the physician is over treating the chronic pain patient. Over treatment often results in irreparable harm to the patient's socioeconomic status, home life, personal relationships, and quality of life in general. A patient's complaints of pain should be acknowledged. Patient and clinician should remain focused on the ultimate goal of rehabilitation leading to optimal functional recovery, decreased healthcare utilization, and maximal self-actualization. It is not clear why rehabilitative needs could not be addressed now through the independent program. This request for more skilled, monitored therapy was not medically necessary.