

Case Number:	CM15-0075946		
Date Assigned:	04/27/2015	Date of Injury:	04/11/2014
Decision Date:	06/03/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/30/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/21/2015

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: Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Plastic 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 52-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 4/11/2014. She reported injuries to her bilateral hands while lifting some totes. Diagnoses have included bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. Treatment to date has included physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medications and bracing. According to the progress report dated 2/27/2015, the injured worker complained of pain in both hands. Exam of the hands revealed generalized puffiness bilaterally. Tinel's sign was positive bilaterally. Phalen's sign was positive bilaterally. Current medications included Celebrex and Norco. A progress report dated 11/10/2014 noted that electromyography (EMG)/nerve conduction study (NCS) to the bilateral upper extremities revealed severe carpal tunnel syndrome to the right hand and mild carpal tunnel syndrome to the left hand. Authorization was requested for right hand carpal tunnel release, cold unit purchase/rental, postoperative hand brace and postoperative physical therapy. A letter of appeal dated 4/10/15 noted that a post-operative cold unit was medically necessary for the patient. The time frame of use was not specifically documented.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Postoperative durable medical equipment (DME) cold unit purchase or rental: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG, Carpal tunnel syndrome, CCT.

Decision rationale: The patient is a 52-year-old female who was approved for right carpal tunnel release. ACOEM does not address a cold unit, but from ODG, carpal tunnel syndrome, continuous cold therapy, they state: The Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) indicates that Continuous Cold Therapy (CCT) is recommended as an option only in the postoperative setting, with regular assessment to avoid frostbite. Postoperative use generally should be no more than seven (7) days, including home use. Passive modalities, such as heat, should be minimized in favor of active treatments. As the requesting surgeon did not document a specific time frame for use, it should not be considered medically necessary.

Postoperative physical therapy 3 times a week for 4 weeks: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 10, 15 and 16.

Decision rationale: As the right carpal tunnel release was considered medically necessary, postoperative physical therapy should be considered medically necessary based on the following guidelines: From page 15 and 16, Recommended as indicated below. There is limited evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of PT (physical therapy) or OT (occupational therapy) for CTS (carpal tunnel syndrome). The evidence may justify 3 to 5 visits over 4 weeks after surgery, up to the maximums shown below. Benefits need to be documented after the first week, and prolonged therapy visits are not supported. Carpal tunnel syndrome should not result in extended time off work while undergoing multiple therapy visits, when other options (including surgery for carefully selected patients) could result in faster return to work. Furthermore, carpal tunnel release surgery is a relatively simple operation that also should not require extended multiple therapy office visits for recovery. Carpal tunnel syndrome (ICD9 354.0): Postsurgical treatment (endoscopic): 3-8 visits over 3-5 weeks; Postsurgical physical medicine treatment period: 3 months; Postsurgical treatment (open): 3-8 visits over 3-5 weeks; Postsurgical physical medicine treatment period: 3 months. "Initial course of therapy" means one half of the number of visits specified in the general course of therapy for the specific surgery in the postsurgical physical medicine treatment recommendations set forth in subdivision (d) (1) of this section. Therefore, based on these guidelines, 12 visits would exceed the initial course of therapy guidelines and should not be considered medically necessary.