

Case Number:	CM15-0075954		
Date Assigned:	04/27/2015	Date of Injury:	05/23/2011
Decision Date:	05/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/09/2015
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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 24-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 5/23/11. She reported acute onset of low back pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having disorder of sacroiliac joint, thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis and lumbosacral spondylosis without myelopathy. Treatment to date has included SI joint injection, physical therapy, oral pain medications including narcotics and L5-S1 interbody fusion. Currently, the injured worker complains of low back and neck pain rated 5/10 without medications and 2/10 with medications. Physical exam noted restricted lumbar spine range of motion with tenderness to palpation over the left lumbar paraspinals and tenderness to palpation over the SI joints. The treatment plan included follow up appointment, SI joint injection and continuation of physical therapy.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Additional Physical Therapy 3x4 for the lumbar spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy Page(s): 98.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, pages 98-99.

Decision rationale: Physical therapy is considered medically necessary when the services require the judgment, knowledge, and skills of a qualified physical therapist due to the complexity and sophistication of the therapy and the physical condition of the patient. However, there is no clear measurable evidence of progress with the PT treatment already rendered including milestones of increased ROM, strength, and functional capacity. Review of submitted physician reports show no evidence of functional benefit, unchanged chronic symptom complaints, clinical findings, and functional status. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for visits of physical therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It appears the employee has received significant therapy sessions without demonstrated evidence of functional improvement to allow for additional therapy treatments. There is no report of acute flare-up, new injuries, or change in symptom or clinical findings to support for formal PT in a patient that has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic injury. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support further physical therapy when prior treatment rendered has not resulted in any functional benefit. The Additional Physical Therapy 3x4 for the lumbar spine is not medically necessary and appropriate.