

Case Number:	CM15-0077001		
Date Assigned:	04/28/2015	Date of Injury:	12/01/2012
Decision Date:	05/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/13/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/22/2015

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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 54-year-old male who sustained a work related injury December 1, 2012, described as cumulative trauma to his low back and right leg while working as a cook. Over the course of care, he was treated with medication, epidural steroid injections, and physical therapy. History included hypertension, stroke 2012, gout, and sleep apnea. According to a physician's progress notes, dated March 13, 2015, the injured worker presented with low back pain radiating to the anterior thigh and medial knee. There is numbness to the right posterolateral thigh down the back of the knee. The pain is rated 6/10 and without medications 9/10. He stated his medications are working well without side effects. Current medications included ibuprofen, MS Contin CR, Allupurinol, Amlodipine Besylate, aspirin, Atenolol, and Atorvastatin. He smokes a half a pack of cigarettes/day and drinks one beer/day. Diagnoses are lumbar facet syndrome; spinal/lumbar degenerative disc disease; low back pain; sprains and strains of the lumbar region. A treating physician's notes, dated March 27, 2015, stated he discussed the case with pain psychologists and agree to the recommendation for a functional restoration program. A request for authorization form, dated April 1, 2015, requests referral to physician for a functional restoration program.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Referral to specialist for functional restoration program: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Functional restoration programs, and Multi-disciplinary pain management programs.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines functional restoration program Page(s): 49.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on functional restoration programs states: Recommended, although research is still ongoing as to how to most appropriately screen for inclusion in these programs. Functional restoration programs (FRPs), a type of treatment included in the category of interdisciplinary pain programs (see chronic pain programs), were originally developed by Mayer and Gatchel. FRPs were designed to use a medically directed, interdisciplinary pain management approach geared specifically to patients with chronic disabling occupational musculoskeletal disorders. These programs emphasize the importance of function over the elimination of pain. FRPs incorporate components of exercise progression with disability management and psychosocial intervention. Long-term evidence suggests that the benefit of these programs diminishes over time, but remains positive when compared to cohorts that did not receive an intensive program. (Bendix, 1998) A Cochrane review suggests that there is strong evidence that intensive multidisciplinary rehabilitation with functional restoration reduces pain and improves function of patients with low back pain. The evidence is contradictory when evaluating the programs in terms of vocational outcomes. (Guzman 2001) It must be noted that all studies used for the Cochrane review excluded individuals with extensive radiculopathy, and several of the studies excluded patients who were receiving a pension, limiting the generalizability of the above results. Studies published after the Cochrane review also indicate that intensive programs show greater effectiveness, in particular in terms of return to work, than less intensive treatment. (Airaksinen, 2006) There appears to be little scientific evidence for the effectiveness of multidisciplinary biopsychosocial rehabilitation compared with other rehabilitation facilities for neck, shoulder pain, as opposed to low back pain, and generalized pain syndromes. (Karjalainen, 2003) Treatment is not suggested for longer than 2 weeks without evidence of demonstrated efficacy as documented by subjective and objective gains. For general information, see chronic pain programs. While functional restoration programs are recommended per the California MTUS, the length of time is for 2 weeks unless there is documentation of demonstrated efficacy by subjective and objective gains. The request does not specify a time amount for the functional restoration program. This is in excess of the recommendations and thus is not medically necessary.