MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0079552		
Date Assigned:	04/30/2015	Date of Injury:	05/19/2014
Decision Date:	05/29/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/25/2015

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 51 year old male, who sustained an industrial/work injury on 5/19/14. He reported initial complaints of left elbow pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having chronic left elbow and forearm pain with lateral epicondylitis. Treatment to date has included medication, diagnostics, surgery (left elbow surgery- detachment, debridement, and re-attachment of the common extensor tendon on 9/30/14), and physical therapy. Currently, the injured worker complains of left elbow pain that was 'doing the same.' Per the primary physician's progress report (PR-2) on 3/26/15, examination revealed the left elbow was improving with pain with pain with extensive use. The left elbow had slight tenderness, range of motion and neurovascular status was normal. Work status was modified. Current plan of care included physical therapy. The requested treatments include continued physical therapy for the left elbow.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Continued physical therapy for the left elbow 2 times a week for 3 weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 10 Elbow Disorders (Revised 2007), Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines.

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 Continued physical therapy for the left elbow 2 times a week for 3 weeks is not medically necessary and appropriate.