

Case Number:	CM15-0094891		
Date Assigned:	05/21/2015	Date of Injury:	08/22/2007
Decision Date:	06/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/04/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/15/2015

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 (IW) is a 67-year-old male who sustained an industrial injury on 08/22/2007. Diagnoses include lumbar degenerative disc disease. Treatment to date has included medications, medial branch nerve blocks and ablations. According to the PR2 dated 12/23/14, the IW reported he continued to have stabbing low back pain. He felt it was getting worse and starting to spread to the thoracic spine. On examination, extension of the lumbar spine was painful. He reported his pain and decreased ability to function had impacted him emotionally, socially and financially, causing stress and anxiety. The provider advised the IW about the benefits of a functional restoration program, and he was willing to try it. A request was made for Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation 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:

Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation for a Functional Restoration Program: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Chronic pain programs (functional restoration programs) Page(s): 30-34. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines: Pain chapter - Chronic pain programs (functional restoration programs).

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

Decision rationale: 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 still 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 and 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. Criteria as outlined above have been met for this recommended service and therefore the request is medically necessary.