

Case Number:	CM17-0019907		
Date Assigned:	02/01/2017	Date of Injury:	10/25/2016
Decision Date:	02/24/2017	UR Denial Date:	01/09/2017
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/30/2017

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 41 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 10-25-16 and was being treated for the diagnosis of back pain. The injured worker was evaluated on 12-27-16 for complaints of pain in the lumbar spine rated 1 on a 10-point scale. The injured worker was not tolerating sitting for activities of daily living such as dressing and had continued pain with activities such as putting on shoes in the morning. Objective findings included frequent shifting, tenderness to palpation of the lumbar spine and lumbar flexion to 90 degrees. The injured worker's gait was normal. Much of the handwritten progress report was difficult to decipher. Treatment to date included activity modifications, diagnostic imaging, and medications. On 1-9-17, utilization review determined physical therapy six visits for the lumbar spine was not medically necessary.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Six physical therapy visits for the lumbar: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004, Section(s): Initial Care. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back, Physical Therapy. Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Physical Therapy Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2016, Section(s): Physical medicine treatment.

Decision rationale: Recommended as indicated below. Physical medicine encompasses interventions that are within the scope of various practitioners (including Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Chiropractic, and MD/DO). Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) is not indicated for addressing chronic pain in most instances; refer to the specific modality within these guidelines (e.g., massage, ultrasound). Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function, range of motion, and can alleviate discomfort. Active therapy requires an internal effort by the individual to complete a specific exercise or task. Refer to the specific intervention within these guidelines (e.g., exercise.) This form of therapy may require supervision from a therapist or medical provider such as verbal, visual and/or tactile instruction(s). Patients are instructed and expected to continue active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. Home exercise can include exercise with or without mechanical assistance or resistance and functional activities with assistive devices. (Colorado, 2002) (Airaksinen, 2006). Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. (Li, 2005) The use of active treatment modalities (e.g., exercise, education, activity modification) instead of passive treatments is associated with substantially better clinical outcomes. In a large case series of patients with low back pain treated by physical therapists, those adhering to guidelines for active rather than passive treatments incurred fewer treatment visits, cost less, and had less pain and less disability. The overall success rates were 64.7% among those adhering to the active treatment recommendations versus 36.5% for passive treatment. (Fritz, 2007) ODG Physical Therapy Guidelines - Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home PT. Also see other general guidelines that apply to all conditions under Physical Therapy in the ODG Preface. Myalgia and myositis, unspecified (ICD9 729.1): 9-10 visits over 8 weeks. Neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis, unspecified (ICD9 729.2) 8-10 visits over 4 weeks. Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (CRPS) (ICD9 337.2): 26 visits over 16 weeks. Arthritis (ICD9 715): 9 visits over 8 weeks. Post-injection treatment: 1-2 visits over 1 week. The requested amount of physical therapy is not in excess of California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines for lumbar pain. The request is medically necessary.