

Case Number:	CM14-0108738		
Date Assigned:	08/01/2014	Date of Injury:	07/05/2012
Decision Date:	11/19/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/01/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/14/2014

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Occupational Medicine and is licensed to practice in California. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

This case is a 44 year old male with a date of injury on 7/15/2012. A review of the medical records indicates that the patient has been undergoing treatment for Lateral Epicondylitis. Subjective complaints (6/18/2014) include tenderness at surgical site (left elbow). Objective findings (6/18/2014) include full range of motion to left elbow, not wearing brace. The treating physician writes (6/18/2014) that the patient's physical therapy was not very aggressive. Treatment has included physical therapy (authorized for 8 post-operative sessions), epicondylitis strap, cortisone injection, left elbow denervation (2/2014). A utilization review dated 7/1/2014 non-certified a request for Initial Work Hardening 2 X 3 for the left elbow due to lack of functional exam and job description.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Initial Work Hardening 2 X 3 for the left elbow: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Work conditioning/work hardening Page(s): 125-126. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Elbow, Work conditioning/work hardening

Decision rationale: Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state: (1) Work related musculoskeletal condition with functional limitations precluding ability to safely achieve current job demands, which are in the medium or higher demand level (i.e., not clerical/sedentary work). An FCE may be required showing consistent results with maximal effort, demonstrating capacities below an employer verified physical demands analysis (PDA).(2) After treatment with an adequate trial of physical or occupational therapy with improvement followed by plateau, but not likely to benefit from continued physical or occupational therapy, or general conditioning.(3) Not a candidate where surgery or other treatments would clearly be warranted to improve function.(4) Physical and medical recovery sufficient to allow for progressive reactivation and participation for a minimum of 4 hours a day for three to five days a week.(5) A defined return to work goal agreed to by the employer & employee:(a) A documented specific job to return to with job demands that exceed abilities, OR(b) Documented on-the-job training(6) The worker must be able to benefit from the program (functional and psychological limitations that are likely to improve with the program). Approval of these programs should require a screening process that includes file review, interview and testing to determine likelihood of success in the program.(7) The worker must be no more than 2 years past date of injury. Workers that have not returned to work by two years post injury may not benefit.(8) Program timelines: Work Hardening Programs should be completed in 4 weeks consecutively or less.(9) Treatment is not supported for longer than 1-2 weeks without evidence of patient compliance and demonstrated significant gains as documented by subjective and objective gains and measurable improvement in functional abilities.(10) Upon completion of a rehabilitation program (e.g. work hardening, work conditioning, outpatient medical rehabilitation) neither re-enrollment in nor repetition of the same or similar rehabilitation program is medically warranted for the same condition or injury.The medical documentation provided did not adequately address the Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines for work conditioning programs. Medical notes do not demonstrate "consistent results with maximal effort, demonstrating capacities below an employer verified physical demands analysis". The treating physician notes that the physical therapist was not aggressive enough during treatment. This does not constitute failure of physical therapy, but rather a need for improvement goal setting or communication within the treatment team. The patient has already received elbow surgery and appears to have benefited. A defined return to work between the employee and employer was not included in the records. The worker is over 2 years past his date of injury. As such, the request for Initial Work Hardening 2 X 3 for the left elbow is not medically necessary.