

Case Number:	CM13-0023979		
Date Assigned:	11/20/2013	Date of Injury:	09/14/2011
Decision Date:	01/08/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/09/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/13/2013

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to a physician reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The physician 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 physician 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.

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 applicant is a represented [REDACTED] police officer who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain reportedly associated with industrial injury of September 14, 2011. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; adjuvant medications; unspecified number of epidural steroid injections; psychotropic medications; and the apparent imposition of permanent work restrictions. It does not appear that the applicant has returned to work with permanent work restrictions in place. In a utilization review report of September 9, 2013, the claims administrator partially the certified the request for eight sessions of acupuncture as three sessions of acupuncture. Norco, however, was not certified. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed, on September 12, 2013. A later note of October 1, 2013 is notable for comments that the applicant is using Cymbalta, Norco, and Percocet. The applicant has attended acupuncture. The applicant's permanent work restrictions are renewed. He is essentially unchanged as compared to last visit. An earlier note of September 3, 2013 is notable for comments that the applicant is unchanged. He denies any medication side effects. He is somewhat overweight with BMI of 34. He received a request to obtain eight sessions of acupuncture and to increase the dosage of Norco from thrice daily to four times daily.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Acupuncture sessions, #8: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: As noted in the Acupuncture guidelines, the time deemed necessary to produce functional improvement following introduction of acupuncture is three to six treatments. The claims administrator partially certified the request as six sessions of acupuncture. There is no support for the eight-session course of treatment proposed by the attending provider as the time deemed necessary to effect functional improvement following introduction of acupuncture is three to six treatments. The claims administrator partially certified six sessions. The proposed eight-session course of acupuncture suggested by the attending provider is not certified.

Increase of Norco from TID to QID QTY: 1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 2009
Page(s): 78.

Decision rationale: As noted on page 78 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, one of the principles of ongoing opioid management is that the lowest possible dose of opioid should be prescribed to improve pain and function. In this case, the attending provider has not clearly stated why two short-acting opioids were needed to improve pain and function, namely Norco and Percocet. It is unclear why the applicant would be using Percocet and Norco concurrently. No compelling rationale for concurrent usage of Percocet and Norco has been proffered by the treating provider. Therefore, the request is not certified, on independent medical review.