

Case Number:	CM13-0027832		
Date Assigned:	01/15/2014	Date of Injury:	01/22/2009
Decision Date:	03/25/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/12/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/23/2013

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 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, has a subspecialty in Interventional Spine 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. 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 is a 67 year-old female who was injured on 1/22/09 when she slipped and fell. She has been diagnosed with lumbago. According to the 8/30/13 report, the patient presents with 6/10 low back pain, about 6-weeks s/p lumbar rhizotomy. She reports dropping her Norco 7.5/325mg and was asking for early refills. The physician noted this was the first incident and that there was not history of drug abuse or addiction. The treatment plan was to refill the medication and request PT at the chiropractic/PT office for 2x6. On 9/12/13 UR recommended partial certification of Norco for weaning and allowed PT x4.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

110 Norco 7.5/325mg: Overturned

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 88-89.

Decision rationale: On 8/30/13, the patient presented with 6/10 low back pain. She had undergone a lumbar rhizotomy on 7/8/13. UR recommended weaning Norco because they did

not see any documentation of functional improvement. However, In the medical records provided for this IMR, the patient's pain has been assess on each visit prior to the 7/8/13 lumbar rhizotomy procedure, and the 3 reports following the procedure the medication efficacy was not listed. On 7/7/13 there is a letter stating the patient's pain levels decreases 5 points on a 0-10 VAS with use of Norco and Terocin. This is reflected in the previous notes from 7/3/13, 6/11/13, 5/14/13 and 4/16/13. The records show the patient's pain has ranges between 6-9/10, and medications will drop the pain 5 points. MTUS states a "Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life" A 5-point reduction of pain on a VAS is significant and meets MTUS definition of a satisfactory response. MTUS does not require weaning or discontinuing opioid pain medication that is providing a satisfactory response.

physical therapy twice a week for six weeks: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 88-89.

Decision rationale: The lumbar rhizotomy on 7/8/13 does not require follow-up days of 90 days and does not meet the definition of surgery ("Surgery" means a procedure listed in the surgery chapter of the Official Medical Fee Schedule with follow-up days of 90 days.) Therefore the MTUS Chronic pain treatment guidelines are applicable over the post-surgical guidelines. MTUS chronic pain guidelines allows for 8-10 physical therapy sessions for various myalgias and neuralgias. The request for 12 sessions of PT will exceed the MTUS recommendations.