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| Case Number: | CM13-0034291 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 12/06/2013 | Date of Injury: | 10/23/2002 |
| Decision Date: | 02/06/2014 | UR Denial Date: | 09/30/2013 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 10/15/2013 |

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 Pain Management 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:

This is a male patient with a date of injury of October 23, 2002. A utilization review determination and dated September 30, 2013 recommends non-certification of Norco, and certification of Kadian. A progress report dated September 6, 2013 identifies subjective complaint stating, "pain level has increased since last visit." He does not report any change in location of pain. No new problems or side effects. Quality of sleep is poor. He is not trying any other therapies for pain relief. He denies any new injury since last visit. His activity level has increased. The patient is taking medications as prescribed. He states the medications are working well. No side effects reported. Pain is increased as he continues to have issues with authorization of his medications. States he has been off Kadian and Skelaxin for over a month now. He states he is frustrated as his pain was stable with these medications prior to authorization issues. Current medications include gabapentin, Kadian ER, Norco, and Skelaxin. Objective examination findings identify, "on inspection of the lumbar spine revealed loss of normal lordosis with straightening of the lumbar spine and surgical scars. Range of motion is restricted with flexion limited to 20° , extension limited to 10° and limited due to pain. On palpation, paravertebral muscles, spasm, tenderness and tight muscle band is noted on both the sides. Lumbar facet loading is positive on both the sides. Straight leg raising test is positive on both the sides in sitting at 110° ." Diagnoses include post lumbar laminectomy syndrome, lumbar facet syndrome, and low back pain. Treatment plan states, "discussed at the rules and regulations surrounding prescription of opioids and complained at length. Failure to follow the rules and regulations will result in tapering discontinuation of medications. The risks and the benefits of the medication prescribed to the patient were fully disclosed." Treatment plan recommends continuation of Skelaxin, Neuron

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg Quantity 120: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 76-79.

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for Norco, California Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that Norco is an opiate pain medication. Due to high abuse potential, close follow-up is recommended with documentation of analgesic effect, objective functional improvement, side effects, and discussion regarding any aberrant use. Guidelines go on to recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improved function and pain. Within the documentation available for review, there is no indication of any specific reduction in pain or specific objective functional improvement. In the absence of such documentation, the currently requested Norco is not medically necessary.