

Case Number:	CM13-0067924		
Date Assigned:	06/11/2014	Date of Injury:	04/06/2001
Decision Date:	08/08/2014	UR Denial Date:	11/20/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/18/2013

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:

The applicant is a represented [REDACTED] employee who has filed a claim for a chronic low back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of April 6, 2001. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; earlier lumbar spine surgery; attorney representations; transfer of care to and from various providers in various specialties; unspecified amounts of chiropractic manipulative therapy; opioid therapy; and the apparent imposition of permanent work restrictions. In a Utilization Review Report dated November 20, 2013, the claims administrator partially certified Norco, for weaning purposes, while approving a followup visit. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. In a January 20, 2013 progress note, the applicant was described as having acute flare of lumbar radicular complaints. Medrol Dosepak and Vicodin were endorsed while permanent work restrictions were continued. The applicant did not appear to be working with said permanent limitations in place. Electrodiagnostic testing of March 13, 2013 was notable for evidence of bilateral peroneal neuropathy versus bilateral S1 radiculopathy and bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. In an applicant questionnaire of March 18, 2013, the applicant stated that he was not working, that he was getting worse, and that unspecified medications had produced temporary pain relief. The applicant acknowledged that he was using marijuana in addition to Norco, Naprosyn, and Valium. On October 3, 2013, Norco and Naprosyn were renewed while the attending provider sought authorization for a lumbar radiofrequency rhizotomy procedure. The attending provider stated that Norco and Naprosyn were diminishing the applicant's pain by 50% temporarily and increasing the applicant's working capacity. The applicant was asked to continue permanent work restrictions. In an applicant questionnaire of October 3, 2013, the applicant stated that he was working. This was not elaborated or expounded upon, however.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

ONE PRESCRIPTION OF HYDROCODONE/APAP 10/325MG # 180: 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 When to Discontinue Opioids topic Page(s): 79.

Decision rationale: As noted on page 79 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, immediate discontinuation is suggested if there is evidence that an applicant is using illicit drugs. In this case, the applicant is using marijuana which, per the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is an illicit drug. Discontinuing hydrocodone-acetaminophen, a short-acting opioid, then, is more appropriate than continuing the same. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.