

Case Number:	CM14-0152327		
Date Assigned:	09/22/2014	Date of Injury:	11/09/2007
Decision Date:	10/21/2014	UR Denial Date:	08/22/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/18/2014

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 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 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:

According to the records made available for review, this is a 53-year-old male with an 11/9/07 date of injury. At the time (7/19/14) of the request for authorization for Norco 5/535mg #90 1 tid MED 15 for the lumbar spine, there is documentation of subjective (back pain, numbness, and sciatic pain) and objective (paraspinal spasm, trigger points, range of motion is 50% reduced, sensation is reduce din thigh) findings, current diagnoses (pain low back, status post fusion L4-5-S1, sciatica, chronic pain syndrome, and L2-3 degenerative joint disease and degenerative disc disease), and treatment to date (medication including Norco for at least 4 months). There is no documentation that the prescriptions are from a single practitioner and are taken as directed; the lowest possible dose is being prescribed; there will be ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects; and functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications with Norco use to date.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 5/535mg #90 1 tid MED 15 for the lumbar spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone, Opioids. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Pain, When to Discontinue Opioids

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-80. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Other Medical Treatment Guideline or Medical Evidence: Title 8, California Code of Regulations, section 9792.20

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines necessitate documentation that the prescriptions are from a single practitioner and are taken as directed; the lowest possible dose is being prescribed; and there will be ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects, as criteria necessary to support the medical necessity of opioids. MTUS-Definitions identifies that any treatment intervention should not be continued in the absence of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services. Within the medical information available for review, there is documentation of diagnoses of pain low back, status post fusion L4-5-S1, sciatica, chronic pain syndrome, and L2-3 degenerative joint disease and degenerative disc disease. However, there is no documentation that the prescriptions are from a single practitioner and are taken as directed; the lowest possible dose is being prescribed; there will be ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. In addition, given documentation of treatment with Norco for at least 4 months, there is no documentation of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications with Norco use to date. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for Norco 5/535mg #90 1 tid MED 15 for the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.