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| Case Number: | CM14-0176754 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 10/30/2014 | Date of Injury: | 12/03/2010 |
| Decision Date: | 12/05/2014 | UR Denial Date: | 09/23/2014 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 10/24/2014 |

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 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 chronic low back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of December 3, 2010. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; adjuvant medications; transfer of care to and from various providers in various specialties; earlier lumbar laminectomy surgery; and extensive periods of time off of work. In a Utilization Review Report dated September 23, 2014, the claims administrator denied a request for Lyrica. The rationale was very difficult to follow. The claims administrator state that the applicant should try and optimize the dosage of Lyrica at higher dosage than those currently prescribed. In a March 19, 2014 progress note, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back pain radiating into left leg. The applicant was reportedly using Norco, Ultram, naproxen, and Prilosec as of this point in time. In an August 29, 2014 progress note, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back and leg pain, 6/10 with medications versus 8/10 without medications. The applicant stated that his activity levels had increased while his quality of sleep was poor. The applicant stated that Cymbalta was ameliorating his mood. In one section of the note, it was stated that the applicant was using Flexeril, naproxen, Norco, omeprazole, and tramadol. In another section of the note, it was stated that the applicant was using naproxen and Cymbalta. In another section of the report, it was stated that the applicant should try Lyrica for neuropathic pain given the applicant's symptoms of radiculopathy. Finally, in yet another section of the report, it was stated that one of the medications the applicant had previously failed was Lyrica owing to issues with sedation developed following introduction of the same. Permanent work restrictions were renewed. The attending provider acknowledged that the applicant was not working with said limitations in place.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lyrica 25 mg # 60 with 0 refills: 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 Functional Restoration Approach to Chronic Pain Management section, Pregabalin topic Page(s).

Decision rationale: While page 99 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines does acknowledge that pregabalin or Lyrica is a first-line treatment for neuropathic pain, as is present here in the form of the applicant's ongoing lumbar radicular complaints, this recommendation, however, is qualified by commentary made on page 7 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines to the effect that an attending provider should incorporate some discussion of medication efficacy and some discussion of side effects into his choice of recommendations. Here, the attending provider posited that the applicant had previously tried Lyrica and been forced to discontinue the same owing to issues associated with sedation upon doing so. The attending provider did not, however, state why he was prescribing and/or renewing Lyrica if the applicant had previously tried and/or failed the same and/or developed intolerable adverse effects with earlier Lyrica usage. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.