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| Case Number: | CM14-0038601 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 06/27/2014 | Date of Injury: | 09/07/2012 |
| Decision Date: | 08/05/2014 | UR Denial Date: | 03/25/2014 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 04/02/2014 |

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 Anesthesiology, 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 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 54-year-old male with a 9/7/12 date of injury, and lumbar spinal fusion on 4/17/13. At the time of request for authorization for Retrospective Norco 10/325mg #120, there is documentation of subjective (low back pain radiating to lower extremities with intensity of 5-9/10)) and objective (tenderness on L4-5 and L5-S1 and pain with decreased range of motion of the lumbar spine) findings. The current diagnoses include low back pain, lumbar discogenic pain syndrome, lumbar radiculitis, and chronic pain syndrome. The treatment to date includes Norco, physical therapy, and lumbar ESI. There is no 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; and of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions or an increase in activity tolerance as a result of Norco use to date.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Retrospective Norco 10/325mg #120 DOS:03/05/2014: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids
Page(s): 74-80.

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. The 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 low back pain, lumbar discogenic pain syndrome, lumbar radiculitis, and chronic pain syndrome. In addition, there is documentation of ongoing treatment with Norco. 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; and there will be ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. In addition, there is no documentation of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions or an increase in activity tolerance as a result of Norco use to date. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for Norco 10/325mg #120 is not medically necessary.