

Case Number:	CM14-0056967		
Date Assigned:	07/09/2014	Date of Injury:	03/22/2010
Decision Date:	12/12/2014	UR Denial Date:	03/25/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/28/2014

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 Emergency Medicine and is licensed to practice in New York. 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 patient is a 63-year-old male who was injured on March 22, 2010. The patient continued to experience pain in his neck and back. Physical examination was notable for mild tenderness of the right upper trapezius, full range of motion of both shoulders, tenderness over the left SI joint, lumbar paraspinous spasm, and grossly symmetrical sensation to both hands. Diagnoses included spinal stenosis in cervical region, intervertebral disc disorder with myelopathy, and displacement of lumbar interventional disc. Treatment included medications, chiropractic adjustment, exercise, and surgery. Requests for authorization for Vimovo 500 mg #60, robaxin 500 mg #120, Oxycontin 20 mg # 90 and Norco 10/325 mg # 120 were submitted for consideration.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Vimovo 500mg #60: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 67-68.

Decision rationale: Vimovo is a combination medication containing naproxen and esomeprazole. Naproxen is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). Chronic Medical Treatment Guidelines state that "anti-inflammatory drugs are the traditional first line of treatment, but long term use may not be warranted". For osteoarthritis it was recommended that the lowest dose for the shortest length of time be used. It was not shown to be more effective than acetaminophen, and had more adverse side effects. Adverse effects for GI toxicity and renal function have been reported. Medications for chronic pain usually provide temporary relief. Medications should be prescribed only one at a time and should show effect within 1-3 days. Record of pain and function with the medication should be documented. In this case the patient had been receiving the medication since at least January 2014 without relief. The duration of treatment increases the risk of adverse effects with little benefit. The medication is not recommended. Esomeprazole is a proton pump inhibitor (PPI). PPI's are used in the treatment of peptic ulcer disease and may be prescribed in patients who are using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and are at high risk for gastrointestinal events. Risk factors for high-risk events are age greater than 65, history of peptic ulcer, GI bleeding or perforation, concurrent use of ASA, corticosteroids, and/or an anticoagulant, or high dose/multiple NSAID (e.g., NSAID + low-dose ASA). The patient in this case was using NSAID medication, but did not have any of the risk factors for a gastrointestinal event. The medication is not recommended. The request should not be authorized. This medication contains drugs that are not recommended. Therefore the medication cannot be recommended. The request should not be authorized.

Robaxin 500mg #120: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 63, 65.

Decision rationale: Robaxin is the muscle relaxant methocarbamol. The mechanism of action is unknown, but appears to be related to central nervous system depressant effects with related sedative properties. Non-sedating muscle relaxants are recommended with caution as a second-line option for short-term treatment (less than two weeks) of acute exacerbations in patients with chronic LBP. Muscle relaxants may be effective in reducing pain and muscle tension, and increasing mobility. However, in most LBP cases, they show no benefit beyond NSAIDs in pain and overall improvement. Also there is no additional benefit shown in combination with NSAIDs. Efficacy appears to diminish over time, and prolonged use of some medications in this class may lead to dependence. Sedation is the most commonly reported adverse effect of muscle relaxant medications. These drugs should be used with caution in patients driving motor vehicles or operating heavy machinery. Drugs with the most limited published evidence in terms of clinical effectiveness include chlorzoxazone, methocarbamol, dantrolene and baclofen. In this case the patient had been taking robaxin since at least January 2014. The duration of treatment surpasses the recommended short-term duration of two weeks. The request should not be authorized.

Norco 10/325 #120: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 11, 74-96.

Decision rationale: Norco is the compounded medication containing hydrocodone and acetaminophen. Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that opioids are not recommended as a first line therapy. Opioid should be part of a treatment plan specific for the patient and should follow criteria for use. Criteria for use include establishment of a treatment plan, determination if pain is nociceptive or neuropathic, failure of pain relief with non-opioid analgesics, setting of specific functional goals, and opioid contract with agreement for random drug testing. If analgesia is not obtained, opioids should be discontinued. The patient should be screened for likelihood that he or she could be weaned from the opioids if there is no improvement in pain of function. It is recommended for short term use if first-line options, such as acetaminophen or NSAIDS have failed. Opioids may be a safer choice for patients with cardiac and renal disease than antidepressants or anticonvulsants. Acetaminophen is recommended for treatment of chronic pain & acute exacerbations of chronic pain. Acetaminophen overdose is a well-known cause of acute liver failure. Hepatotoxicity from therapeutic doses is unusual. Renal insufficiency occurs in 1 to 2% of patients with overdose. The recommended dose for mild to moderate pain is 650 to 1000 mg orally every 4 hours with a maximum of 4 g/day. In this case the patient had been taking the Norco since at least January 2014 and had not obtained analgesia. Criteria for long-term use of opioids have not been met. The request should not be authorized.

Oxycontin 20mg #90: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 74-96.

Decision rationale: Oxycontin is the opioid medication, oxycodone. Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that opioids are not recommended as a first line therapy. Opioid should be part of a treatment plan specific for the patient and should follow criteria for use. Criteria for use include establishment of a treatment plan, determination if pain is nociceptive or neuropathic, failure of pain relief with non-opioid analgesics, setting of specific functional goals, and opioid contract with agreement for random drug testing. If analgesia is not obtained, opioids should be discontinued. The patient should be screened for likelihood that he or she could be weaned from the opioids if there is no improvement in pain of function. It is recommended for short-term use if first-line options, such as acetaminophen or NSAIDS have failed. In this case the patient had been taking oxycontin since at least January 2014 and had not obtained analgesia. Criteria for long-term use of opioids have not been met. The request should not be authorized.