MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM14-0096882		
Date Assigned:	07/28/2014	Date of Injury:	05/06/2007
Decision Date:	10/23/2014	UR Denial Date:	05/30/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/25/2014

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 neck, low back, and knee pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of May 6, 2007.Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; transfer of care to and from various providers in various specialties; unspecified amounts of physical therapy; unspecified amounts of chiropractic manipulative therapy; and earlier lumbar spine surgery in 2009.In a utilization review report dated May 30, 2014, the claims administrator denied a request for Norco, a short-acting opioid.The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed.In a July 17, 2009, medical-legal evaluation, it was acknowledged that the applicant was not working as of that point in time.In a July 22, 2014, medical-legal evaluation, the applicant reported persistent complaints of low back pain, 6-8/10. The applicant also reported some derivative complaints of depression. The applicant also had issues with anxiety attacks. It was suggested that the applicant was working at this point in time. The applicant was interacting with friends and family members, albeit to a lesser degree than in the past. No psychiatric restrictions were endorsed on this occasion.In a June 26, 2014, orthopedic medical-legal evaluation, it was stated that the applicant was working approximately 20 hours a week in a sedentary architecture design role.In a clinical progress note dated May 21, 2014, the applicant reported persistent complaints of depression, anxiety, shoulder pain, and low back pain, 6/10. The applicant was independent in terms of ambulating, driving, dressing, etc. The applicant was maintaining work as a part-time consultant, it was noted. The applicant's medication list included baclofen, Norco, Lidoderm, AndroGel, and Cialis, it was stated. It was stated that the applicant continued to report a 75% reduction in pain scores with Norco and a 50% reduction in pain scores with baclofen. The applicant was asked to continue home exercises. The applicant was reportedly stable on Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg, quantity: 240 with 1 refill: Overturned

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines When To Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

Decision rationale: As noted on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the cardinal criteria for continuation of opioid therapy include evidence of successful return to work, improved functioning, and/or reduced pain achieved as a result of the same. In this case, the applicant has achieved and/or maintained part-time work status as a consultant, the attending provider has posited, with ongoing usage of Norco. The applicant is reporting a 75% reduction in pain scores with ongoing Norco usage. Ongoing usage of Norco has facilitated the applicant's ability to interact with others and perform home exercises, the attending provider has further posited. Continuing the same, on balance, is indicated. Therefore, the request is medically necessary.