

Case Number:	CM13-0012166		
Date Assigned:	11/08/2013	Date of Injury:	08/13/2001
Decision Date:	04/16/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/08/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/16/2013

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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:

State(s) of Licensure: Texas, New York, California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine

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 66-year-old [REDACTED] beneficiary who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of August 13, 2001. In a Utilization Review Report dated August 8, 2013, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Lyrica. The claims administrator referenced June 19, 2013, RFA form and associated progress note in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. In a progress note dated February 26, 2013, the applicant reported persistent complaints of low back pain radiating to the bilateral lower extremities, 3/10. The applicant was using Norco and Nucynta for pain relief. Permanent work restrictions were renewed, along with Norco and BuTrans. The attending provider suggested that the applicant obtain a stationary bike. It did not appear that the applicant was working with previously imposed permanent limitations. On June 19, 2013, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back pain radiating to the left leg, 3 to 4/10. The applicant was using Lyrica twice daily and Norco thrice daily for pain relief. The applicant also had superimposed issues with diabetes. Surgical incisions lines are about the lumbar spine, suggesting that the applicant had undergone earlier lumbar spine surgery. It was stated that Lyrica was being employed for radicular pain complaints. The attending provider stated that the Norco and Lyrica were collectively reducing the applicant's scores from 8/10 without medications to 3/10 with medications. The applicant was asked to perform home exercises. The applicant was using a cane to move about. The attending provider suggested that the applicant was using a stationary bike for exercise owing to residual left lower extremity weakness following an earlier failed lumbar spine surgery.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

PRESCRIPTION OF LYRICA 75MG #60 WITH ONE REFILL: Overturned

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pregabalin (Lyrica); Pain Mechanisms Page(s): 99; 3.

Decision rationale: The request for Lyrica, an anticonvulsant adjuvant medication, was medically necessary, medically appropriate, and indicated here. As noted on page 99 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, pregabalin or Lyrica is FDA approved in the treatment of diabetic neuropathy and postherpetic neuralgia and, by implication, is also endorsed as a first-line treatment for neuropathic pain, which per page 3 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, is characterized by lancinating, numbing, electric, shock like, and burning sensations, all which were present here on or around the date in question in the form of the applicant's ongoing complaints of low back pain radiating to the left leg. The applicant's ongoing radicular pain complaints had, per the treating provider, been attenuated following introduction of Lyrica, which was, in conjunction with Norco, reducing the applicant's pain scores from 8/10 without medications to 3/10 with medications and was reportedly facilitating the applicant's ability to perform home exercises, including using the stationary bike. Continuing the same, on balance, was indicated. Therefore, the request was medically necessary.