

Case Number:	CM14-0200937		
Date Assigned:	12/11/2014	Date of Injury:	10/26/2009
Decision Date:	01/28/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/20/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/01/2014

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 pain syndrome, chronic neck pain, and mood disorder reportedly associated with an industrial injury of October 26, 2009. In a Utilization Review Report dated November 20, 2014, the claims administrator failed to approve requests for MS Contin and Norco. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. In a March 13, 2014 progress note, the applicant reported having completed a pain education and coping skills class. The applicant's medication list at this point included Amitiza, morphine, Norco, Protonix, Wellbutrin, Relafen, Pamelor, Senna, iron, and Mevacor, it was acknowledged. In a medical-legal evaluation dated March 7, 2011, the applicant reported persistent multifocal pain complaints about the neck and arm. The applicant was reportedly working part time at this point, it was suggested. On August 6, 2014, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of neck and shoulder pain. The applicant had obtained recent trigger point injections. The applicant was on morphine, Norco, Protonix, Wellbutrin, Relafen, Pamelor, Senna, Relistor, iron, Mevacor, and vitamin D. The applicant was status post left carpal tunnel release surgery in April 2014. The applicant had gained weight. The applicant was now represented, it was acknowledged. The applicant was asked to follow up with his psychiatrist. The applicant was employing morphine thrice daily and Norco four times daily for pain control purposes. The applicant was also using Relafen twice daily and Protonix for reflux. The applicant was using Wellbutrin for mood disturbance. It was again stated that the applicant was working. The attending provider posited that the applicant's pain scores were better controlled with pain medications and that the applicant could perform activities of daily living and self-care with the same. Morphine, Norco, Pamelor, and Wellbutrin were endorsed. The attending provider posited that the applicant's ability to cook, clean, perform household chores, and perform activities of self-care and personal hygiene had all been ameliorated as a result of

ongoing medication consumption. On July 7, 2014, the applicant again posited that her medications were working well in terms of attenuating her neck and wrist pain complaints. The attending provider again stated that the applicant was working in one section of the note. Morphine and Norco were renewed. In a medical-legal evaluation dated September 9, 2014, the applicant again reported multifocal complaints of neck and shoulder pain status post earlier cervical fusion surgery and status post earlier cervical epidural steroid injection therapy. The applicant had also undergone a carpal tunnel release surgery. 4-5/10 neck and shoulder pain were reported. The applicant did have psychological issues. The applicant had continued to work, it was stated, throughout the claim, with the exception of some temporary periods of debility following each surgery which transpired. On November 6, 2014, the applicant reported 8/10 pain without medications versus 4/10 pain with medications. MS Contin, Norco, Relafen, Protonix, and Wellbutrin were renewed. It was reiterated that the applicant was working and that her ability to cook, clean, and perform other household chores have all been ameliorated with medication consumption.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MS Contin 15mg #90: Overturned

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

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 injured worker has returned to and maintained successful return to work status with ongoing medication consumption. The injured worker's pain scores were reduced from 8/10 without medications to 4/10 with medications, per progress note of November 6, 2014. The injured worker's ability to perform household chores, cook, clean, and work have all been reportedly ameliorated with ongoing medication consumption, including ongoing morphine consumption. Therefore, the request is medically necessary.

Norco 10/325mg #90: Overturned

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

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 injured worker has returned to and maintained successful return to work status with ongoing medication consumption which the injured worker's treating providers and medical-legal evaluator have suggested. The injured worker is reportedly deriving appropriate analgesia from ongoing medication consumption, including ongoing Norco consumption. The injured worker's pain scores were appropriately reduced from 8/10 without medications to 4/10 with medications. The injured worker's ability to perform cooking, cleaning, and other household chores have, furthermore, been ameliorated as a result of ongoing medication consumption, including ongoing Norco consumption. Therefore, the request is medically necessary.