MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0103252		
Date Assigned:	06/08/2015	Date of Injury:	12/31/2012
Decision Date:	07/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/11/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/29/2015

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 51-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain (LBP) reportedly associated with an industrial injury of December 31, 2012. In a Utilization Review report dated May 11, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. A RFA form received on May 4, 2015 was referenced in the determination. The full text of the UR report was not, however, attached to the application. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On September 29, 2014, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back pain. The applicant's BMI was 24, it was incidentally noted. The applicant had undergone an earlier lumbar fusion surgery. Work restrictions were endorsed, although the treating provider suggested that the applicant's employer was unable to accommodate said limitation. The applicant was using Norco at a rate of twice daily, it was suggested. Little-to-no discussion of medication efficacy transpired on this date. In a RFA form dated May 4, 2015, Norco was renewed. The applicant was using the same at a rate of four times a day, it was suggested. In a December 22, 2014 progress note, the attending provider stated that the applicant's ongoing usage of Norco at a rate of four tablets daily was ameliorating residual back pain complaints. The applicant had transitioned to home exercises, it was reported. The applicant was given a 23% whole-person impairment rating. No work restrictions were, however, imposed. The applicant exhibited a normal gait. The attending provider stated that the applicant was doing home exercises and playing golf regularly. In a March 17, 2015 progress note, it was suggested that the applicant was working as a mechanic, despite ongoing complaints of low back pain. The attending provider maintained that the applicant's pain complaints were effectively

controlled through ongoing usage of Norco at a rate of four tablets a day. Medications were continued and/or renewed. The applicant was seemingly returned to regular work.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #120: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 7) When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

Decision rationale: Yes, the Norco, a short-acting opioid, was medically necessary, medically appropriate, and indicated here. 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. Here, the applicant had returned to and maintained full-time, regular duty work status as a mechanic, the treating provider reported at various points in 2014 and 2015, referenced above. The applicant was deriving appropriate analgesia with ongoing Norco usage, it was reported. The attending provider further suggested that the applicant's ability to perform heavy lifting at work and/or perform home exercises to include playing golf had been ameliorated as a result of ongoing medication consumption, including ongoing Norco usage. Continuing the same, on balance, was indicated. Therefore, the request was medically necessary.