MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0109737		
Date Assigned:	06/16/2015	Date of Injury:	01/30/2014
Decision Date:	07/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/21/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/08/2015

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: California
Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 injured worker is a 54 year old male who sustained a work related injury January 30, 2014. Past history included venous thromboembolic disease with pulmonary embolus (PE)and deep vein thrombosis (DVT) lower extremities on therapeutic Warfarin, type II diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease, acute myocardial infarction, and obesity. According to an office visit dated March 31, 2015, the injured worker presented to the clinic as follow-up for chronic low back pain radiating down his right leg. He reports numbness to the groin if he walks a block or farther. His pain has improved since the last visit and finds Norco provides modest pain relief without side-effects. He reported going to the emergency room a week ago for chest pain and the work up was negative. On examination, his gait is no longer antalgic. There is a decrease in active range of motion of the lumbar spine in all planes with provocation of low back pain in all planes, worse with lumbar flexion and right lateral flexion, improved compared to prior evaluation. There is tenderness to palpation of the right lumbar paraspinals, sacral sulcus and the lumbosacral junction. Straight leg raise is positive on the right and left straight leg raise causes low back pain. Diagnoses are documented as thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis, unspecified; displacement of lumbar intervertebral disc without myelopathy; spinal stenosis of lumbar region; neurogenic bladder. Treatment plan included refill Norco and to pick up an additional refill script in April when due. At issue, a request for authorization, dated May 7, 2015, for Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 7.5/325mg twice daily as needed for pain #60 with 6 refills, requested 5/7/15: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page(s) 74-96.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The Norco 7.5/325mg twice daily as needed for pain #60 with 6 refills, requested 5/7/15 is not medically necessary and appropriate.