MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0135629		
Date Assigned:	07/23/2015	Date of Injury:	10/28/1998
Decision Date:	08/20/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/22/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/14/2015

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: North Carolina
Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 (IW) is a 61 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 10/28/1998. The mechanism of injury and initial report of injury are not found in the records reviewed. The injured worker was diagnosed as having: Left sacroiliac joint syndrome, Lumbar fusion at L5-S1 in the past. MRI from 12/21/2011 showed fusion had no solid bony growth across the disk, no evidence of disk herniation, mild right foraminal disk bulge, and mild foraminal stenosis on multiple levels. Reactive depression due to chronic pain. Erectile dysfunction due to chronic pain. Left knee pain. MRI (11/2009) showed post-operative changes fusion at L5-S1, severe foraminal stenosis on the left side at L5-S1. X-ray of the left hip from 07/16/2012 was within normal limits. Treatment to date has included medications, surgery, and acupuncture. Currently, the injured worker complains of chronic low back pain with radicular symptoms in the left lower extremity. His last urine screen (05/12/2015) was negative for Norco. He relates that he took a trip and forgot his medications at the hotel so he was without them for a few days. He states Neurontin significantly decreases his neuropathic symptoms in the left lower extremity more than 30%. He reported his pain as a 5 on the scale of 0-10, with a high of 8 on a scale of 0-10, and decreasing to a 5 on a scale of 0-10 at his best with medication. Objective findings are a mild antalgic gait with a limp favoring the left leg, and a slow rising from a seated position. Current medications include Norco, Neurontin, Testim 1% gel, Colace, Celexia, and Lidoderm patches. The treatment plan is for six sessions of acupuncture and a refill of the Norco with follow-up in one month. A request for authorization was made for Norco tab 10-325mg 3-6 daily #180.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco tab 10-325mg 3-6 daily #180: 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): 76-84.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on opioids states for ongoing management: On-Going Management. Actions Should Include: (a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed, and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. (b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. (c) Office: Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Information from family members or other caregivers should be considered in determining the patient's response to treatment. The 4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring: Four domains have been proposed as most relevant for ongoing monitoring of chronic pain patients on opioids: pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant (or non-adherent) drug-related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the "4 A's" (analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and aberrant drug taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs. (Passik, 2000) (d) Home: To aid in pain and functioning assessment, the patient should be requested to keep a pain dairy that includes entries such as pain triggers, and incidence of end-of-dose pain. It should be emphasized that using this diary will help in tailoring the opioid dose. This should not be a requirement for pain management. (e) Use of drug screening or inpatient treatment with issues of abuse, addiction, or poor pain control. (f) Documentation of misuse of medications (doctor-shopping, uncontrolled drug escalation, drug diversion). (g) Continuing review of overall situation with regard to nonopioid means of pain control. (h) Consideration of a consultation with a multidisciplinary pain clinic if doses of opioids are required beyond what is usually required for the condition or pain does not improve on opioids in 3 months. Consider a psych consult if there is evidence of depression, anxiety or irritability. Consider an addiction medicine consult if there is evidence of substance misuse. When to Continue Opioids (a) If the patient has returned to work. (b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain. (Washington, 2002) (Colorado, 2002) (Ontario, 2000) (VA/DoD, 2003) (Maddox-AAPM/APS, 1997) (Wisconsin, 2004) (Warfield, 2004) The long-term use of this medication class is not recommended per the California MTUS unless there documented evidence of benefit with measurable outcome measures and improvement in function. There is documented significant improvement in VAS scores for significant periods of time. There are no objective measurements of improvement in function. Therefore all criteria for the ongoing use of opioids have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.