

Case Number:	CM15-0143328		
Date Assigned:	08/04/2015	Date of Injury:	08/26/2003
Decision Date:	09/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/23/2015

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 is a 53 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 8-26-03. The diagnoses have included lumbago, lumbar degenerative disc disease (DDD), lumbar disc displacement, lumbar post laminectomy syndrome, other chronic neuropathic pain and spinal cord implant paddle lead spectra 9-9-2014. Treatment to date has included medications, diagnostics, lumbar surgery, acupuncture, chiropractic, epidural steroid injection (ESI), heat, massage, physical therapy, spinal cord stimulator trial and spinal cord stimulator implant. Currently, as per the physician progress note dated 6-30-15, the injured worker complains of continued low back pain that is rated 3 out of 10 on the pain scale. The physical exam reveals that the lumbar spine has tenderness to palpation, the straight leg raise is positive bilaterally at 75 degrees, there is decreased range of motion with spasm, pain with extension and pain with forward flexion. The current medications included Percocet, Norco, Belsomra, Omeprazole, Ambien, trazadone, and Dulcolax. There are no recent diagnostic reports and there is no urine drug screen report noted in the records. The physician requested treatments included Percocet 10/325 mg #120, One (1) SCS paddle AP and lateral view x-ray of the lumbar spine and One (1) SCS paddle AP and lateral view of the thoracic spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Percocet 10/325 mg #120: 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 diary 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 non-opioid 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 no 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 certified.

One (1) SCS paddle AP and lateral view x-ray of the lumbar spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 308.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303.

Decision rationale: The ACOEM chapter on low back pain and x-rays states: Lumbar spine x rays should not be recommended in patients with low back pain in the absence of red flags for serious spinal pathology, even if the pain has persisted for at least six weeks. The patient has no indication of serious spinal pathology on exam and no red flags. Therefore, the request is not certified.

One (1) SCS paddle AP and lateral view of the thoracic spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 177-179.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 173-174.

Decision rationale: The ACOEM chapter on upper back complaints states: Criteria for ordering imaging studies are: Emergence of a red flag; Physiologic evidence of tissue insult or neurologic dysfunction; Failure to progress in a strengthening program intended to avoid surgery; Clarification of the anatomy prior to an invasive procedure. The provided medical records do not indicate the patient meets criteria as per the ACOEM for x-rays of the thoracic spine. Therefore, the request is not certified.