MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0148515		
Date Assigned:	08/11/2015	Date of Injury:	03/01/2005
Decision Date:	09/11/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/30/2015

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 54 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on March 1, 2005. The initial symptoms reported by the injured worker are unknown. The injured worker was currently diagnosed as having lumbar radiculitis, degenerative disc disease, chronic low back pain with radicular symptoms and displacement of lumbar intervertebral disc without myelopathy. Treatment to date has included diagnostic studies, physical therapy, medication and lumbar epidural injection. He reported 20% reduction in pain with a lumbar epidural injection. Notes stated that he failed conservative therapy. On July 17, 2015, the injured worker complained of low back and left lower extremity pain. The pain is rated as a 4 on a 1-10 pain scale without medication and a 2 on the pain scale with medication. The treatment plan included a right L4-5 and right L5-S1 facet injection. On July 3, 2015, Utilization Review non-certified the request for alcohol testing (any method other than breath) for date of service January 20, 2015, citing California MTUS Guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Alcohol testing, any method other than breath, Qty 1, (retrospective DOS 01/20/2015):
Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Drug testing Page(s): 43.

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: 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. The California MTUS does recommend urine drug screens as part of the criteria for ongoing use of opioids. There is no mention of alcohol screening and there is no rationale in the provided medical records for this testing. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.