MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0168571		
Date Assigned:	09/09/2015	Date of Injury:	10/28/2008
Decision Date:	10/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/05/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/27/2015

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 69 year old female, who sustained an industrial-work injury on 10-28-08. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for lumbar facet hypertrophy, lumbar degenerative disc disease (DDD), right hip arthralgia, mechanical low back pain and sacroiliitis. Medical records dated (12-8-14 to 6-23-15) indicate ongoing low back pain with no significant change. The pain is rated 6-8 out of 10 on pain scale. The injured worker reports that the Norco decreases the pain by about 55 percent and allows her to walk longer. The injured worker complains of low back pain with associated pins and needles with radiation of the pain and numbness to the right lower extremity (RLE) and foot. She reports that walking more than 20 minutes causes increased pain. The medical records also indicate that her activities of daily living (ADL) are affected by activity and pain. Per the treating physician report dated 6-23-15 the employee has not returned to work. The physical exam dated from (12-8-14 to 6-23-15) reveals that she has limited lumbar range of motion with right sided movements reproducing her pain. The extension is most painful. There is tenderness to palpation of the bilateral lumbar facets with positive facet loading. Treatment to date has included pain medication including Norco for at least 6 months, diagnostics, orthoscopic surgery right hip, activity modifications, injections, and physical therapy 15 sessions, chiropractic 10 sessions, acupuncture 5 sessions, home exercise program (HEP) and other modalities. The treating physician indicates that the urine drug test result dated 3-6-15 was consistent with the medication prescribed. The original Utilization review dated 8-5-15 denied a request for Norco 10-325mg

#120 as there was no documented functional or pain improvement and therefore no support for continued use.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10-325mg #120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 3 Initial Approaches to Treatment Page(s): 47-49, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 78.

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 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 medically necessary.