

Case Number:	CM15-0169048		
Date Assigned:	09/09/2015	Date of Injury:	03/05/2011
Decision Date:	10/07/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/28/2015
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:

This is a 56 year old female with a date of injury on 3-5-2011. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for status post permanent percutaneous spinal cord stimulator implant, complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS) of right foot, right ankle and right leg, right foot internal derangement, right foot fracture, depression and anxiety. Medical records (5-21-2015 to 7-8-2015) indicate ongoing right leg, right ankle and right foot pain. She reported that pain at the IPG battery site had subsided since 7-6-2015. The physical exam (5-21-2015 to 7-8-2015) reveals an antalgic gait favoring the right foot. There was right foot allodynia, hypesthesia, hyperalgesia and trophic skin changes. There was tenderness to palpation of the entire foot. Treatment has included surgery and pain medications (Norco since at least December 2014). Prior medications included Oxycodone 7.5-325mg, Morphine Sulfate IR and Oxycontin). The treating physician (7-8-2015) indicates that the injured worker shows no aberrant behavior with the Norco. The progress report from 6-16-2015 notes that a previous urine drug screen was consistent. A urine drug screen was performed at the 6-16-2015 visit with no report documented. The 7-8-2015 progress report documents that Norco provides 40 percent decrease of pain and 40 percent improvement of activities of daily living. The original Utilization Review (UR) (7-28-2015) modified a request for Norco 10-325mg #160 to Norco 10- 325mg one tablet every six hours; dispense 120 tablets with no refills.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #150: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids for chronic pain.

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 documentation of significant subjective improvement in pain such as VAS scores. There is no objective measure of improvement in function. For these reasons all the criteria set forth above of ongoing and continued used of opioids have not been met. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.