MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0029806		
Date Assigned:	02/23/2015	Date of Injury:	12/30/1997
Decision Date:	04/07/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/28/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/18/2015

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: New Jersey, Michigan, California
Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular Medicine

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 December 30, 1997. His diagnoses include lumbar spondylosis and osteoarthritis of the knee. He has been treated with analgesic and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, epidurals, physical therapy, surgery, MRI, x-rays, and trigger point injections. On January 16, 2015, his treating physician reports lower back, elbow, wrist, leg and knee pain. The pain radiates down the left leg and was described as numbness, pins, and tingling. The pain level without pain medications is 10/10, and with medications is 5/10. The bilateral lumbar exam revealed the range of motion was moderately decreased and painful, bilateral straight leg raise testing was negative, bilateral Patrick's and Reverse Thomas testing was positive, bilateral lower extremities deep tendon reflexes were normal, normal sensation of the bilateral lumbar 1-sacral 2, normal muscle strength, no lumbar and thoracic paraspinal tenderness to palpation, positive tenderness to palpation over the lumbar facet joints, and no tenderness to palpation over the sacroiliac joints. The bilateral knee exam revealed an abnormal gait, able to heel/toe walk, mildly decreased range of motion with pain of bilateral knees - more on the right than the left, bilateral knee effusion or Baker's cyst, negative Compression testing of the patellae, negative bilateral Lachman and drawer testing, negative McMurray bilaterally, bilateral valgus stress reveals no laxity, bilateral varus stress reveals laxity, positive bilateral medial and lateral joint line tenderness, and good patellar tracking bilaterally. The treatment plan includes refilling his analgesic medication. On January 28, 2015, Utilization Review modified a prescription for Norco 10/325mg #120, noting the long-term use of opioids is not recommended. The weaning of this medication should

continue as was recommended in the previous review. The California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS), Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines was cited.

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 Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for use of opioids Page(s): 76-79.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Norco (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) is a synthetic opioid indicated for the pain management but not recommended as a first line oral analgesic. In addition and according to MTUS guidelines, ongoing use of opioids should follow specific rules:"(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. 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."According to the patient file, there is no objective documentation of pain and functional improvement to justify continuous use of Norco. Norco was used for longtime without documentation of functional improvement or evidence of return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg #120 is not medically necessary.