MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0038332		
Date Assigned:	03/09/2015	Date of Injury:	11/13/2003
Decision Date:	04/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/04/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/02/2015

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: Arizona, California
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 66-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 11/13/2003. The diagnoses have included lumbago and lumbar degenerative disc disease. Treatment to date has included medication. According to the Primary Treating Physician's Progress Report date 1/19/2015, the injured worker had a chief complaint of ongoing lower back pain that extended to the right leg and right foot. He also experienced intermittent chest pains. He reported experiencing some mild depression. He had been referred to a psychologist for evaluation in the past which he did not feel was helpful. He rated his pain as 5/10 with medications. The injured worker ambulated with a cane. Physical exam revealed tenderness at the lumbar spine and facet joint, decreased flexion, decreased extension and decreased lateral bending. Treatment plan was for Cymbalta 30mg one every day for seven days and then increased to 60mg one every day for help with depression and pain.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

(1) Prescription of Cymbalta 30mg #7: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Low Back Pain, Anti-depressants.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines antidepressants Page(s): 13.

Decision rationale: Cymbalta is an SNRI antidepressant. Antidepressants are an option, but there are no specific medications that have been proven in high quality studies to be efficacious for treatment of lumbosacral radiculopathy. SSRIs have not been shown to be effective for low back pain (there was not a significant difference between SSRIs and placebo) and SNRIs have not been evaluated for this condition. Cymbalta may be used for major depression; however, the claimant was described as feeling depressed rather than having a diagnosis of major depression. A psychiatric evaluation was not provided. Tricyclics offer better pain relief for back pain and can provide mood benefit. The use of Cymbalta with an escalating plan to 60 mg is not medically necessary.

(1) Prescription of Cymbalta 60mg #30 with 1 refill: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Low Back Pain, Antidepressants.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines antidepressants Page(s): 13.

Decision rationale: Cymbalta is an SNRI antidepressant. Antidepressants are an option, but there are no specific medications that have been proven in high quality studies to be efficacious for treatment of lumbosacral radiculopathy. SSRIs have not been shown to be effective for low back pain (there was not a significant difference between SSRIs and placebo) and SNRIs have not been evaluated for this condition. Cymbalta may be used for major depression; however, the claimant was described as feeling depressed rather than having a diagnosis of major depression. Tricyclics offer better pain relief for back pain and can provide mood benefit. The use of Cymbalta with an escalating plan to 60 mg without documentation as well as response at 30 mg is not medically necessary.