MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0046467		
Date Assigned:	03/19/2015	Date of Injury:	08/04/2008
Decision Date:	04/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/17/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/12/2015

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: Texas, 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:

This is a 46 year old male patient who sustained an industrial injury on 08/04/2008. Diagnoses include lumbar intervertebral disc without myelopathy and spinal stenosis of the lumbar region. Per the physician progress note dated 02/13/2015, he had complaints of severe, constant pain in his low back radiating to his right foot. His level of pain is 9 out of 10 in severity. The physical examination revealed paralumbar muscle guarding and an absent right ankle reflex. The current medications list includes flector patch, celebrex and norco. He has had urine drug screening on 9/5/2014 with consistent result. Other therapy for this injury was not specified in the records provided.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco tablet 10/325mg #120, 1 tablet every 6 hours: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids for chronic pain Page(s): 80.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use Page(s): 76-80.

Decision rationale: Request: Norco tablet 10/325mg #120, 1 tablet every 6 hours
Norco contains hydrocodone and acetaminophen. Hydrocodone is an opioid analgesic. According to CA MTUS guidelines, "A therapeutic trial of opioids should not be employed until the patient has failed a trial of non-opioid analgesics. Before initiating therapy, the patient should set goals, and the continued use of opioids should be contingent on meeting these goals." The records provided do not specify that that patient has set goals regarding the use of opioid analgesic. A treatment failure with non-opioid analgesics is not specified in the records provided. Other criteria for ongoing management of opioids are: "The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function, continuing review of the overall situation with regard to non opioid means of pain control. Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects." Consider the use of a urine drug screen to assess for the use or the presence of illegal drugs. The records provided do not provide a documentation of response in regards to pain control and objective functional improvement to opioid analgesic for this patient. The continued review of the overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control (including anticonvulsants and /or antidepressants for chronic pain), is not documented in the records provided. As recommended by the cited guidelines a documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects should be maintained for ongoing management of opioid analgesic, these are not specified in the records provided. Response to lower potency opioids like tramadol is not specified in the records provided. With this, it is deemed that this patient does not meet criteria for ongoing use of opioids analgesic. The request for Norco tablet 10/325mg #120, 1 tablet every 6 hours is not medically necessary or established for this patient at this time