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| Case Number: | CM15-0055256 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 03/30/2015 | Date of Injury: | 12/09/1996 |
| Decision Date: | 05/05/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 03/10/2015 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 03/23/2015 |

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 York, Tennessee
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Emergency 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 51-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury on December 9, 1996. The mechanism of injury is unknown. The injured worker was diagnosed as having pain in thoracic spine, headache, occipital neuralgia right, myofascial pain syndrome, lumbar radiculopathy, lumbar facet arthropathy, cervical facet arthropathy, cervical radiculopathy, sacroiliac joint dysfunction, chronic low back pain, cervicgia, occipital neuralgia and chronic pain post motor vehicle accident. Treatment to date has included medications, home exercises and moist heat. On April 9, 2015, the injured worker complained of cervical area, lower back, upper back and lower extremity pain. The pain was described as frequent, radiating, sharp, stabbing, pressure, cramping and spasm. She rated the pain as a 5 on a 1-10 pain scale on a good day and as a 9/10 on the pain scale on a bad day. The pain is aggravated by cold, activity, sitting and standing. Medication, heat, rest, lying down and quiet were noted to alleviate the pain. The treatment plan included medications, home exercises, moist heat, stretches and follow-up visit.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

One (1) prescription of Percocet 10/325mg #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Oxycodone/acetaminophen, Opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 11, 74-96.

Decision rationale: Percocet 10/325 is compounded medication containing oxycodone/acetaminophen. Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that opioids are not recommended as a first line therapy. Opioid should be part of a treatment plan specific for the patient and should follow criteria for use. Criteria for use include establishment of a treatment plan, determination if pain is nociceptive or neuropathic, failure of pain relief with non-opioid analgesics, setting of specific functional goals, and opioid contract with agreement for random drug testing. If analgesia is not obtained, opioids should be discontinued. The patient should be screened for likelihood that he or she could be weaned from the opioids if there is no improvement in pain or function. It is recommended for short-term use if first-line options, such as acetaminophen or NSAIDs have failed. Opioids are considered a second-line treatment for several reasons: (1) head-to-head comparisons have found that opioids produce more side effects than TCAs and gabapentin; (2) long-term safety has not been systematically studied; (3) long-term use may result in immunological and endocrine problems (including hypogonadism); (4) treatment may be associated with hyperalgesia; & (5) opioid use is associated with misuse/abuse. Opioids may be a safer choice for patients with cardiac and renal disease than antidepressants or anticonvulsants. Acetaminophen is recommended for treatment of chronic pain & acute exacerbations of chronic pain. Acetaminophen overdose is a well-known cause of acute liver failure. Hepatotoxicity from therapeutic doses is unusual. Renal insufficiency occurs in 1 to 2% of patients with overdose. The recommended dose for mild to moderate pain is 650 to 1000 mg orally every 4 hours with a maximum of 4 g/day. In this case, the patient has been receiving Norco since at least November 2014 and has not obtained analgesia. Criteria for long-term opioid use have not been met. The request is not medically necessary and should not be authorized.