MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0067146		
Date Assigned:	04/14/2015	Date of Injury:	10/27/2014
Decision Date:	08/18/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/08/2015

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
Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal 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(n) 55 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 10/27/14. She reported pain in her neck, back, wrists and knees due to a fall. The injured worker was diagnosed as having cervical sprain, bilateral wrist carpal tunnel, lumbar radiculopathy and left knee contusion. Treatment to date has included physical therapy and pain medications. As of the PR2 dated 2/20/15, the injured worker reports ongoing pain in the neck, back, wrists and left knee. The treating physician noted tenderness to palpation in the reported areas. The treating physician requested Gabapentin 300mg #30, Flexeril 10mg #60, an EMG/NCV of the bilateral upper and lower extremities, a lumbar MRI and a cervical MRI.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Gabapentin 300mg #30: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Anti-epilepsy drugs (AEDs) Page(s): 16-20, 49. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain Chapter--Anti-epilepsy drugs (AEDs) for pain.

Decision rationale: According to the CA MTUS (2009) and ODG, Neurontin (Gabapentin) is an anti-epilepsy drug, which has been shown to be effective for treatment of diabetic painful neuropathy and post-herpetic neuralgia, and has been considered as a first-line treatment for neuropathic pain. The records documented that this injured worker has chronic pain. Neurontin has been part of her medical regimen. However, there is no documentation of subjective or objective findings consistent with improvement of pain to necessitate use of Neurontin. The above request is not medically necessary.

Flexeril 10mg #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle relaxants Page(s): 63-65. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain Chapter--Muscle relaxants.

Decision rationale: According to the reviewed literature, Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril) is not recommended for the long-term treatment of chronic pain. This medication has its greatest effect in the first four days of treatment. In addition, this medication is not recommended to be used for longer than 2-3 weeks. According to CA MTUS Guidelines, muscle relaxants are not considered any more effective than nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications alone. In this case, the available records show that the injured worker has not shown a documented benefit or any functional improvement from prior Cyclobenzaprine use. Based on the currently available information, the medical necessity for this muscle relaxant medication has not been established. The requested treatment is not medically necessary.

EMG/NCV bilateral lower extremities: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain Chapter-Electrodiagnostic testing (EMG/NCS).

Decision rationale: The California MTUS/ACOEM Guidelines state, "Electromyography (EMG), including H-reflex tests, may be useful to identify subtle, focal neurologic dysfunction in patients with low back symptoms lasting more than three or four weeks." The ODG regarding nerve conduction studies (NCS) states, "Not recommended. There is minimal justification for performing nerve conduction studies when a patient is presumed to have symptoms on the basis of radiculopathy. EMGs (electromyography) are recommended as an option (needle, not surface)

to obtain unequivocal evidence of radiculopathy, after 1-month conservative therapy, but EMG's are not necessary if radiculopathy is already clinically obvious." The injured worker is being treated for low back pain, lumbar radiculopathy. The findings on exam reported equal deep tendon reflexes. The objective findings on examination did not include evidence of neurologic dysfunction such as sensory, reflex, or motor system change. There were no symptoms or findings that define evidence of a peripheral neuropathy. There was insufficient information provided by the attending health care provider to establish the medical necessity or rationale for the requested electrodiagnostic studies. The request for an EMG/NCV of the bilateral lower extremities is not medically necessary and appropriate.

EMG/NCV bilateral upper extremities: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 177-179. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain Chapter-Electrodiagnostic testing (EMG/NCS).

Decision rationale: The California MTUS/ACOEM Guidelines state, "Electromyography (EMG), including H-reflex tests, may be useful to identify subtle, focal neurologic dysfunction in patients with neck or arm symptoms, or both, lasting more than three or four weeks." The ODG regarding nerve conduction studies (NCS) states, "Not recommended. There is minimal justification for performing nerve conduction studies when a patient is presumed to have symptoms on the basis of radiculopathy. EMGs (electromyography) are recommended as an option (needle, not surface) to obtain unequivocal evidence of radiculopathy, after 1-month conservative therapy, but EMG's are not necessary if radiculopathy is already clinically obvious." The records of injured worker mention pain in neck, back, wrists and knees due to a fall. The objective findings on examination did not include evidence of neurologic dysfunction such as sensory, reflex, or motor system change. The injured worker is not presented as having radiculopathy and there were no symptoms or findings that define evidence of a peripheral neuropathy. There is insufficient information provided by the treating health care provider to establish the medical necessity or rationale for electrodiagnostic studies. The request for an EMG/NCV of the bilateral upper extremities is not medically necessary and appropriate.

MRI lumbar spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back Chapter--Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Decision rationale: As per Official Disability Guidelines (ODG)-MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is indicated for Lumbar spine trauma: trauma, neurological deficit, Thoracic spine

trauma: with neurological deficit, Lumbar spine trauma: seat belt (chance) fracture (If focal, radicular findings or other neurologic deficit), Uncomplicated low back pain, suspicion of cancer, infection, other red flags. Uncomplicated low back pain, with radiculopathy, after at least 1 month conservative therapy, sooner if severe or progressive neurologic deficit, Uncomplicated low back pain, prior lumbar surgery, Uncomplicated low back pain, cauda equina syndrome, Myelopathy (neurological deficit related to the spinal cord), traumatic Myelopathy, painful Myelopathy, sudden onset, Myelopathy, stepwise progressive, Myelopathy, slowly progressive, Myelopathy, infectious disease patient, Myelopathy, oncology patient. Repeat MRI: When there is significant change in symptoms and/or findings suggestive of significant pathology (eg, tumor, infection, fracture, neurocompression, recurrent disc herniation). As per progress notes in the Medical Records, the injured worker does not appear to have significant changes in symptoms and signs, and no documentation of abnormal neurological exam, and there are no red flags. Therefore, the request for MRI Lumbar spine is not medically necessary and appropriate.

MRI cervical spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 180. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck Chapter--Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Decision rationale: MTUS/ACOEM state many patients with strong clinical findings of nerve root dysfunction due to disk herniation recover activity tolerance within one month; there is no evidence that delaying surgery for this period worsens outcomes in patients without progressive neurologic findings. Spontaneous improvement in MRI documented cervical disk pathology has been demonstrated with a high rate of resolution. As per ODG -criteria for MRI (magnetic resonance imaging): Chronic neck pain (= after 3 months conservative treatment), radiographs normal, neurologic signs or symptoms present, Neck pain with radiculopathy if severe or progressive neurologic deficit, Chronic neck pain, radiographs show spondylosis, neurologic signs or symptoms present, Chronic neck pain, radiographs show old trauma, neurologic signs or symptoms present, Chronic neck pain, radiographs show bone or disc margin destruction, Suspected cervical spine trauma, neck pain, clinical findings suggest ligamentous injury (sprain), radiographs and/or CT "normal", Known cervical spine trauma: equivocal or positive plain films with neurological deficit, Upper back/thoracic spine trauma with neurological deficit. Review of submitted medical records of injured worker mention about pain in the neck, back, wrists and left knee. No new injury is reported. The records are not clear about neurological findings, and there are no red flags. Without such evidence and based on guidelines cited, the request for MRI cervical spine is not medically necessary and appropriate.