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| Case Number: | CM14-0151848 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 09/19/2014 | Date of Injury: | 09/01/1999 |
| Decision Date: | 10/21/2014 | UR Denial Date: | 08/30/2014 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 09/17/2014 |

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Family Medicine and is licensed to practice in North Carolina. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

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 patient is a 65-year-old with a reported date of injury of March 1, 1999. The patient has the diagnoses of cervical radiculopathy, cervical post-laminectomy syndrome, cervical disc protrusion, cervical stenosis, cervical degenerative disc disease, cervical facet joint arthropathy, bilateral ulnar neuropathy, right shoulder rotator cuff and right shoulder pain. Past treatment modalities have included bilateral carpal tunnel release and cervical fusion. Per the most recent progress report provided by the primary treating physician dated September 17, 2014, the patient had complaints of bilateral neck pain, bilateral forearm pain and numbness of the hand bilaterally in the 3rd to 5th digits. The physical exam noted tenderness to palpation in the cervical spine with restricted range of motion. There was decreased sensation noted along the right trapezius muscles and along the ulnar aspect of the bilateral forearms. The treatment plan recommendations included an appeal for the patient's Percocet and continuation of the patient's other medications.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Percocet 10/325 mg, 100 count: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines opioids
Page(s): 76-84.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on opioids states for ongoing management that actions should include:(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. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Information from family members or other caregivers should be considered in determining the patient's response to treatment. The 4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring: 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 nonadherent) 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 for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs. (Passik, 2000)(d) Home: To aid in pain and functioning assessment, the patient should be requested to keep a pain diary that includes entries such as pain triggers, and incidence of end-of-dose pain. It should be emphasized that using this diary will help in tailoring the opioid dose. This should not be a requirement for pain management.(e) Use of drug screening or inpatient treatment with issues of abuse, addiction, or poor pain control.(f) Documentation of misuse of medications (doctor-shopping, uncontrolled drug escalation, drug diversion).(g) Continuing review of overall situation with regard to nonopioid means of pain control.(h) Consideration of a consultation with a multidisciplinary pain clinic if doses of opioids are required beyond what is usually required for the condition or pain does not improve on opioids in 3 months. Consider a psych consult if there is evidence of depression, anxiety or irritability. Consider an addiction medicine consult if there is evidence of substance misuse. When to Continue Opioids(a) If the patient has returned to work(b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain(Washington, 2002) (Colorado, 2002) (Ontario, 2000) (VA/DoD, 2003) (Maddox-AAPM/APS, 1997) (Wisconsin, 2004) (Warfield, 2004)The long-term use of this medication class is not recommended per the California MTUS unless there documented evidence of benefit with measurable outcome measures and improvement in function. The most recent progress reports note the patient experiences a 40% decrease in pain and a 40% improvement in the ADLs on this medication. The patient also sees an improvement in the Oswestry Disability Index score from 32 to 50 with the medication. There is no mention of the patient's work status. However there is objective measures of improvement in pain and function provided by the progress notes. Therefore, the request for Percocet 10/325 mg, 100 count, is medically necessary and appropriate.