

Case Number:	CM14-0092768		
Date Assigned:	07/25/2014	Date of Injury:	06/09/2011
Decision Date:	09/17/2014	UR Denial Date:	06/12/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/19/2014

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 Anesthesiology, has a subspecialty in Pain Medicine and is licensed to practice in Texas and Florida. 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 61 year old female who was injured on 6/9/2011. The diagnoses are low back pain, right hip pain, depression and anxiety disorder. The MRI of the lumbar spine showed multilevel facet arthropathy and mild neural foramina stenosis. An EMG/NCV in 2013 showed chronic left L5 radiculopathy. The patient reported an increase in pain following lumbar facet rhizotomy in June 2013. On 5/21/2014, Dr. [REDACTED] recommended continuation of medications. The patient had completed psychotherapy and Cognitive Behavioral therapy. A Utilization Review determination was rendered on 6/12/2014 recommending non certification for Norco 10/325mg #210 and Lexapro 20mg #30 prescribed 5/21/2014.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #210: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 3 Initial Approaches to Treatment Page(s): 47-48, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines-Pain Chapter.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 9792.24.2 Page(s): 74-96.

Decision rationale: The CA MTUS recommend that opioids can be utilized during acute exacerbation of chronic pain that did not respond to treatment with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), physical therapy (PT) and non-opioid treatment. The use of opioids with psychiatric medications in patients with significant psychiatric symptoms is associated with increased incidence of aberrant drug behavior, diversion, adverse drug interaction and potentiation of sedative effects. The records indicate that the patient has significant psychosomatic symptoms. The pain score had remained consistently high despite medications, interventional pain procedures, psychotherapy and cognitive behavioral therapy. The criteria for the use of Norco 10/325mg #210 prescribed 5/21/2014 was not met.

Lexapro 20mg #30: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines-Pain Chapter and Mental Illness & Stress.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 9792.24.2 Page(s): 13-16. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG- pain chapter.

Decision rationale: The CA MTUS and the ODG guidelines did not specifically address the treatment of co-existing psychiatric disorders in the treatment of chronic pain. The presence of severe psychiatric disorders is associated with increased incidence of aberrant drug behaviors, non-compliance and adverse medications effects. The records indicate that the patient was diagnosed with anxiety and depression disorders. There was EMG/NCS report consistent with lumbar radiculopathy. Lexapro can be beneficial in the treatment of neuropathic pain as well as the psychiatric disorders. The criterion for the use of Lexapro 20mg #30 was met.