MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0109869		
Date Assigned:	06/16/2015	Date of Injury:	01/17/2013
Decision Date:	07/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/05/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/08/2015

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 Jersey, Alabama, California
Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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 34 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 1/17/2013. The current diagnoses are low back sprain/strain, low back pain, right knee sprain/strain, status post-surgery, and right shoulder sprain/strain. According to the progress report dated 4/14/2015, the injured worker reports for follow-up and medication refill. No specific subjective complains were noted. The pain is rated 8/10 on a subjective pain scale. The current medications are Motrin and Norco. Treatment to date has included medication management, MRI studies, physical therapy, electrodiagnostic testing, chiropractic, and surgical intervention. The plan of care includes prescriptions for Hydrocodone and Flexeril.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Hydrocodone 10/325mg quantity 90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen Page(s): 91.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for use of opioids Page(s): 76-79.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Norco (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) is a synthetic opioid indicated for the pain management but not recommended as a first line oral analgesic. In addition and according to MTUS guidelines, ongoing use of opioids should follow specific rules: "(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. 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 non-adherent) 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."According to the patient's file, there is no objective documentation of pain and functional improvement to justify continuous use of Norco. Norco was used for longtime without documentation of functional improvement or evidence of return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg #90 is not medically necessary.

Flexeril 10mg quantity 30: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle Relaxants (for pain) Page(s): 64.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle Relaxants Page(s): 63.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Flexeril, a non-sedating muscle relaxants, is recommended with caution as a second line option for short term treatment of acute exacerbations in patients with chronic spasm and pain. Efficacy appears to diminish over time and prolonged use may cause dependence. There is no recent documentation of pain and spasticity improvement with the use of Flexeril. Therefore, the request for Flexeril 10mg #30 is not medically necessary.