MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0126334		
Date Assigned:	07/10/2015	Date of Injury:	12/19/1995
Decision Date:	08/06/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/30/2015

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: Texas, Florida, California
Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational 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 63-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 12/19/95. She reported neck and shoulder pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having cervical post-laminectomy syndrome, degeneration of cervical intervertebral disc, long-term use of medication, cervical spondylosis without myelopathy, myalgia and myositis, carpal tunnel syndrome, brachial neuritis or radiculitis, insomnia, and chronic migraines. Treatment to date has included 4 cervical spine surgeries, physical therapy, TENS, H-wave, chiropractic treatment, massage, acupuncture, trigger point injections, ice/heat application, and medication. The injured worker had been taking Norco since at least 2/23/15. Currently, the injured worker complains of neck pain, headache, and mid to lower back pain. The treating physician requested authorization for Tizanidine 4mg #60 and Norco 10/325mg #240.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

One prescription of Tizanidine 4mg #60: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 63-66 of 127.

Decision rationale: This claimant was injured now 20 years ago with cervical post-laminectomy syndrome, degeneration of cervical intervertebral disc, long term use of medication, cervical spondylosis without myelopathy, myalgia and myositis, carpal tunnel syndrome, brachial neuritis or radiculitis, insomnia, and chronic migraines. Treatment to date has included 4 cervical spine surgeries, physical therapy, TENS, H-wave, chiropractic treatment, massage, acupuncture, trigger point injections, ice/heat application, and medication. The injured worker had been taking Norco since at least 2/23/15. Currently, the injured worker complains of neck pain, headache, and mid to lower back pain, but there is no mention of acute muscle spasm. Regarding muscle relaxants like Zanaflex, the MTUS recommends non-sedating muscle relaxants with caution as a second-line option for short-term treatment of acute exacerbations in patients with chronic LBP. (Chou, 2007) (Mens, 2005) (Van Tulder, 1998) (van Tulder, 2003) (van Tulder, 2006) (Schnitzer, 2004) (See, 2008). In this case, there is no evidence of it being used short term or acute exacerbation. There is no evidence of muscle spasm on examination. The records attest it is being used long term, which is not supported in MTUS. Further, it is not clear it is being used second line; there is no documentation of what first line medicines had been tried and failed. Further, the MTUS notes that in most LBP cases, they show no benefit beyond NSAIDs in pain and overall improvement. Also there is no additional benefit shown in combination with NSAIDs. Efficacy appears to diminish over time, and prolonged use of some medications in this class may lead to dependence. The request is not medically necessary.

Norco 10/325mg #240: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 79, 80 and 88 of 127.

Decision rationale: As shared previously, this claimant was injured now 20 years ago with cervical post-laminectomy syndrome, degeneration of cervical intervertebral disc, long term use of medication, cervical spondylosis without myelopathy, myalgia and myositis, carpal tunnel syndrome, brachial neuritis or radiculitis, insomnia, and chronic migraines. Treatment to date has included 4 cervical spine surgeries, physical therapy, TENS, H-wave, chiropractic treatment, massage, acupuncture, trigger point injections, ice/heat application, and medication. The injured worker had been taking Norco since at least 2/23/15. Functional improvement out of the opiate usage is not evident. The current California web-based MTUS collection was reviewed in addressing this request. They note in the Chronic Pain section: When to Discontinue Opioids: Weaning should occur under direct ongoing medical supervision as a slow taper except for the below mentioned possible indications for immediate discontinuation. They should be discontinued: (a) If there is no overall improvement in function, unless there are extenuating circumstances. When to Continue Opioids; (a) If the patient has returned to work. (b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain. In the clinical records provided, it is not clearly evident these key criteria have been met in this case. Moreover, in regards to the long term use of opiates, the MTUS also poses several analytical necessity questions such as: has the diagnosis changed, what other medications is the patient taking, are they effective, producing side effects, what treatments have been attempted since the use of opioids, and what is the documentation of pain and functional improvement and compare to baseline. These are important issues, and they have not been addressed in this case. As shared earlier, there especially is no documentation of functional improvement with the regimen. The request for the opiate usage is not certified per MTUS guideline review. The request is not medically necessary.