MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0128527		
Date Assigned:	07/15/2015	Date of Injury:	11/15/2011
Decision Date:	08/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/03/2015

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: California, District of Columbia,
Maryland Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

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 52 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 11/15/11. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar sprain and strain, neck sprain and strain, cervicobrachial syndrome, and thoracic or lumbar neuritis or radiculitis. Treatment to date has included physical therapy, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, heat application, ice application, and medication. The injured worker had been taking Norco since at least 12-18-14. On 5-11-15 and 6-8-15 pain was rated as 4 of 10 at least and 5 of 10 at worst. Currently, the injured worker complains of pain in the cervical spine, lumbar spine, left hip, and left leg. The treating physician requested authorization for Norco 10/325mg #180.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #180: Upheld

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): 78, 91.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding on-going management of opioids: "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 any 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." Review of the available medical records reveals no documentation to support the medical necessity of norco nor any documentation addressing the "4 A's" domains, which is a recommended practice for the on-going management of opioids. Specifically, the notes do not appropriately review and document pain relief, functional status improvement, appropriate medication use, or side effects. The MTUS considers this list of criteria for initiation and continuation of opioids in the context of efficacy required to substantiate medical necessity, and they do not appear to have been addressed by the treating physician in the documentation available for review. Furthermore, efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. There is no documentation comprehensively addressing this concern in the records available for my review. With regard to medication history, the documentation indicates that the injured worker has been using this medication since 12/18/14. As MTUS recommends discontinuing opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, this request is not medically necessary.