MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0178941		
Date Assigned:	09/21/2015	Date of Injury:	01/04/2010
Decision Date:	10/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/11/2015

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: North Carolina
Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 60 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 01-04-2010. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker (IW) is undergoing treatment for high blood pressure, chronic low back pain and bilateral radicular symptoms, chronic thoracic pain, chronic neck pain, bilateral shoulder pain, right hip and knee pain, bilateral foot and ankle pain, depression, anxiety, and constipation. Medical records (01-09-2015 to 07-31-2015) indicate ongoing neck pain, back pain, bilateral shoulder pain, pain in both legs and feet, and tightness in the hips and back. Records also indicate improved functioning from taking Norco for pain (per a "pain questionnaire attached"), and increased physical and psychosocial functioning as a result of the opiate medication. However, that "Pain Questionnaire" was not available for review. Per the treating physician's progress report (PR), the IW has not returned to work. The physical exams, dated 07-03-2015 and 07-31-2015, revealed decreased rotation range in the cervical spine, increased flexion of the trunk, decreased range of motion in both shoulders, and continued tenderness and spasms in the paracervical, thoracic and paralumbar musculature. Relevant treatments have included work restrictions, and pain medications (Norco since at least 10-2014). No urine drug screening were available for review; however, the treating physician states that there is no evidence of doctor shopping, abnormal behavior, non-compliance, aberrant behavior, use of uncontrolled drugs, or drug diversion. The PR (07-31-2015) shows that the following medication was requested: Norco 10-325mg #180 tablets which was modified to Norco 10-325mg #52 tablets. The original utilization review (08-18-2015) partially approved a request for Norco 10-325 #51 (original request for #180) to allow for weaning.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

180 Tablets of Norco 10/325mg: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids for chronic pain.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on opioids states for ongoing management: On-Going Management. 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 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 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 dairy 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 non-opioid 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. There is no documented significant improvement in VAS scores for significant periods of time. There are no objective measurements of improvement in function or activity specifically due to the medication.. Therefore all criteria for the ongoing use of opioids have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.