MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0073283		
Date Assigned:	04/23/2015	Date of Injury:	01/09/2013
Decision Date:	05/20/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/09/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/17/2015

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 56 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 1/9/13. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar radiculopathy, low back pain, sacroiliitis, lumbar fascial pain and bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. Treatment to date has included oral medications including opioids, physical therapy and home exercise program. Currently, the injured worker complains of persistent neck and low back pain. Low back pain radiates to right thigh and leg and neck pain is mostly on right side radiates to right upper extremity and is associated with tingling and numbness in first 3 digits. Physical exam noted spasms in cervical paraspinal muscles and stiffness in cervical spine. Dysesthesia is noted to light touch in right median nerve distribution and to light touch in left C6 dermatome. The treatment plan included prescriptions for Norco, Gabapentin and request for authorization for (EMG) Electromyogram / (NCS) Nerve Condition Velocity studies of upper bilateral extremities.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco tab 5-325mg, one by mouth every 12 hours as needed for pain, #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 76, 77, 78, 43, 74, 86, 80, 91, 124. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Pain, Opioids for chronic pain.

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 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 improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco tab 5-325mg, one by mouth every 12 hours as needed for pain, #60 is not medically necessary.