

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0139247		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/05/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	05/11/2012
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/30/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/20/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/28/2014

### 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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Occupational Medicine is licensed to practice in California. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

### 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 applicant is represented [REDACTED] employee who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of May 11, 2012. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; transfer of care to and from various providers in various specialties; opioid therapy; unspecified amounts of acupuncture; unspecified amounts of physical therapy; and extensive periods of time off of work. In a Utilization Review Report dated August 20, 2014, the claims administrator partially certified request for tramadol, apparently for weaning/tapering purposes. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. In a May 7, 2014 progress note, the applicant reported persistent complaints of low back pain radiating into the left leg, reportedly severe. The applicant had reportedly ceased unspecified pain medications owing to dyspepsia. The applicant had also reported development of anxiety and depression. Medrox, Prilosec, and Norflex were renewed while the applicant was placed off of work, on total temporary disability. On June 4, 2014, the applicant again reported persistent complaints of mid and low back pain with derivative complaints of anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance. The applicant was again placed off of work, on total temporary disability, while Medrox, Prilosec, and Norflex were again renewed. A Medical-legal Evaluation of February 25, 2014 suggested that the applicant was using metformin and glipizide as of that point in time. It appears that tramadol was initiated for the first time on an August 6, 2014 progress note. The applicant reported persistent complaints of low back pain radiating into the left leg, superimposed on issues of anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance. Medrox, Prilosec, and Norflex were again refilled.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Tramadol Hydrochloride Tablets, 50mg:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines not specified Page(s): 111-113.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Tramadol topic. Page(s): page 133,.

**Decision rationale:** The request in question was seemingly a first-time request for tramadol. Tramadol was first endorsed on an August 6, 2014 progress note, referenced above. While page 113 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines does acknowledge that tramadol is not recommended as a first-line oral analgesic, in this case, the applicant had, in fact, seemingly proven recalcitrant to numerous other oral and topical agents, including Norflex, Medrox, etc. Introduction of tramadol was indicated on or around the date in question, given the failure of other agents. Therefore, the request is medically necessary.