

Case Number:	CM14-0158173		
Date Assigned:	10/01/2014	Date of Injury:	01/03/1985
Decision Date:	11/19/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/08/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/26/2014

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 Family Medicine and is licensed to practice in California and Texas. 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:

This is a 75 year old male patient who sustained a work related injury on 1/3/85. The patient sustained the injury as a result of being rear ended while driving a company vehicle. The current diagnoses included generation of the lumbosacral intervertebral disc, sciatica, stenosis spinal and herniated nucleus pulposus (HNP) lumbar. Per the doctor's note dated 8/25/14, patient has complaints of low back pain. A physical examination revealed moderate spasm and slightly positive straight leg raise (SLR) on the left and limited range of motion. The current medication lists includes Vicodin. The patient has had MRI of the low back. Diagnostic imaging reports were not specified in the records provided. The patient has received an epidural steroid injection for this injury. The patient has received an unspecified number of the PT visits for this injury.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Vicodin 5/325mg #60, 1 po q4-6hr prn: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines CRITERIA FOR USE OF OPIOIDS Page(s): 76-80.

Decision rationale: Vicodin is an opioid analgesic According to CA MTUS guidelines cited below, "A therapeutic trial of opioids should not be employed until the patient has failed a trial of non-opioid analgesics. Before initiating therapy, the patient should set goals, and the continued use of opioids should be contingent on meeting these goals." The records provided do not specify that patient has set goals regarding the use of opioid analgesic. A treatment failure with non-opioid analgesics is not specified in the records provided. Other criteria for ongoing management of opioids are: "The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. Continuing review of the overall situation with regard to nonopioid means of pain control. Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Consider the use of a urine drug screen to assess for the use or the presence of illegal drugs."The records provided do not provide a documentation of response in regards to pain control and functional improvement to opioid analgesic for this patient. The continued review of overall situation with regard to nonopioid means of pain control is not documented in the records provided. As recommended by MTUS a documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects should be maintained for ongoing management of opioid analgesic, these are not specified in the records provided. MTUS guidelines also recommend urine drug screen to assess for the use or the presence of illegal drugs in patients using opioids for long term. A recent urine drug screen report is not specified in the records provided. Whether improvement in pain translated into objective functional improvement is not specified in the records provided With this, it is deemed that, this patient does not meet criteria for ongoing continued use of opioids analgesic. The medical necessity of Vicodin 5/325mg #60, 1 po q4-6hr prn is not established for this patient.