

Case Number:	CM14-0163798		
Date Assigned:	10/08/2014	Date of Injury:	11/06/2007
Decision Date:	10/31/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/05/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/06/2014

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 North Carolina. 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 patient is a 62-year-old with a reported date of injury of 11/06/2007. The patient has the diagnoses of cervicalgia, bilateral hand pain, left S1 radiculopathy, bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome and postsurgical carpal and cubital tunnel releases in the right arm. Per the most recent progress notes provided for review by the treating physician dated 09/16/2014, the patient had complaints of ongoing pain in the cervical spine both hands, left shoulder and both arms. The pain is rated a 6-7/10. The physical exam noted moderate pain on cervical loading with decreased range of motion, paraspinal tenderness and spasticity. There was a positive Faber test on the left lumbar spine. Treatment plan recommendations included continuation of pain medication and a home exercise program.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Prospective usage of Norco 10/32mg #90 - Prospective use of generic Norco 10/325mg #90:
Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, Criteria for Use.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines opioids,.

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 diary 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)- Chronic back pain: Appears to be efficacious but limited for short-term pain relief, and long term efficacy is unclear (>16 weeks), but also appears limited. Failure to respond to a time limited course of opioids has led to the suggestion of reassessment and consideration of alternative therapy. There is no evidence to recommend one opioid over another. In patients taking opioids for back pain, the prevalence of lifetime substance use disorders has ranged from 36% to 56% (a statistic limited by poor study design). Limited information indicated that up to one-fourth of patients who receive opioids exhibit aberrant medication-taking behavior. (Martell-Annals, 2007) (Chou, 2007) 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. The most recent progress reports do not mention the patient's current work status. The patient continues to have significant pain. There is no noted significant improvement in pain per the VAS scale with medication. Functional improvement is simply measured as the patient's ability to have increased mobility and perform ADLs. For these reasons the criteria set forth above of ongoing and continued use of opioids have not been met. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.

Prospective usage of Topiramate 25mg #30 with 3 refills: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Anti-epilepsy Drugs.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines
Antiepilepsy drugs (AED) Page(s): 16-19.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on AED therapy states: Antiepilepsy drugs (AEDs) Anti-epilepsy drugs (AEDs) are also referred to as anti-convulsants. Recommended for neuropathic pain (pain due to nerve damage). (Gilron, 2006) (Wolfe, 2004) (Washington, 2005) (ICSI, 2005) (Wiffen-Cochrane, 2005) (Attal, 2006) (Wiffen-

Cochrane,2007) (Gilron, 2007) (ICSI, 2007) (Finnerup, 2007) There is a lack of expert consensus on the treatment of neuropathic pain in general due to heterogeneous etiologies, symptoms, physical signs and mechanisms. Most randomized controlled trials (RCTs) for the use of this class of medication for neuropathic pain have been directed at postherpetic neuralgia and painful polyneuropathy (with diabetic polyneuropathy being the most common example). There are few RCTs directed at central pain and none for painful radiculopathy. (Attal, 2006) The choice of specific agents reviewed below will depend on the balance between effectiveness and adverse reactions. Topiramate (Topamax, no generic available) has been shown to have variable efficacy, with failure to demonstrate efficacy in neuropathic pain of "central" etiology. It is still considered for use for neuropathic pain when other anticonvulsants fail. Topiramate has recently been investigated as an adjunct treatment for obesity, but the side effect profile limits its use in this regard. (Rosenstock, 2007) AED therapy is a recommended first line choice for the treatment of neuropathic pain per the California MTUS. However, Topamax is only considered first line when other anticonvulsants have failed. It also has failure of efficacy for central etiology neuropathic pain. There is no documentation of failure of other anticonvulsants. For these reasons criteria as set forth above have not been met. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.