

Case Number:	CM14-0172333		
Date Assigned:	10/23/2014	Date of Injury:	02/04/1999
Decision Date:	11/25/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/15/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/17/2014

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 Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and is licensed to practice in New York. 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 injured worker is a male with a date of injury on 2/4/1999. He reports chronic neck pain that radiates into the shoulders. His symptoms were consistent with chronic cervical radiculopathy. He has been using multiple medications including Norco (an opioid analgesic) and Celebrex (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication). His treating physician is requesting the continued use of Norco 10/325mg #90 and Celebrex 200mg #90.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #90: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 81.

Decision rationale: The injured worker in this case presents with chronic neck pain due to a work related accident that occurred on 2/4/1999. His treating physician is requesting Norco 10/325 mg #90. However, the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule guidelines state that the long term efficacy of opioids is unclear (>16 weeks) and it also appears limited. The Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule further states that a major concern about the use of opioids for

chronic pain is that most randomized controlled trials have been limited to a short-term period (70 days). This leads to a concern about confounding issues such as tolerance, opioid-induced hyperalgesia, long range adverse effects such as hypogonadism and/or opioid abuse, and the influence of placebo as a variable for treatment effect. In addition, the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule states that there is also no evidence that opioids showed long-term benefit or improvement in function when used as treatment for chronic back pain. Therefore, the request for Norco 10/325 mg #90 would not be considered medically necessary in this case.

Celebrex 200mg #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines NSAIDs, GI symptoms & cardiovascular risk Page(s): 68-69.

Decision rationale: The injured worker in this case presents with chronic neck pain due to a work related accident that occurred on 2/4/1999. His treating physician is requesting Celebrex 200mg #90. However, the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule guidelines state that non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as Celebrex are indicated for acute pain but were no more effective than other drugs such as acetaminophen, narcotic analgesics, and muscle relaxants in the treatment of chronic back pain. The Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule further states that besides the above well-documented side effects of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, there are other less well known effects of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, and the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications has been shown to possibly delay and hamper healing in all the soft tissues including muscles, ligaments, tendons, and cartilage. Therefore, the request for Celebrex 200mg #90 would not be considered medically necessary in this case.