

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0023914		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	06/11/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/01/2005
<b>Decision Date:</b>	07/15/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	02/20/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/25/2014

### HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to a Physician Reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The Physician Reviewer is Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Emergency Medicine, and is licensed to practice in Florida. 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 Physician 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 patient is a 33 year-old with a date of injury of 11/01/05. A progress report associated with the request for services, dated 01/20/14, identified subjective complaints of low back and bilateral leg pain. Objective findings noted higher neurologic function to be intact. Diagnoses included lumbar disc disease with sciatica. Treatment has included chiropractic, acupuncture, NSAIDs, oral and topical analgesics, and an antidepressant. A Utilization Review determination was rendered on 02/20/14 recommending non-certification of "tramadol HCl ER 100 mg, take 1 tablet twice daily #60 with refill x 3".

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**TRAMADOL HCL ER 100 MG, TAKE 1 TABLET TWICE DAILY #60 WITH REFILL X 3:** Upheld

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

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 308, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines SECTION OPIOIDS, TRAMADOL Page(s): 74-96, 113. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation OFFICIAL DISABILITY GUIDELINES (ODG) PAIN, OPIOIDS, SPECIFIC DRUG LIST: TRAMADOL.

**Decision rationale:** Tramadol (Ultram) is a centrally acting synthetic opioid analgesic. The California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS) Guidelines related to on-going treatment of opioids indicate that there should be documentation and ongoing review of pain relief, functional status, appropriate 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. A recent epidemiologic study found that opioid treatment for chronic non-malignant pain did not seem to fulfill any of the key outcome goals including pain relief, improved quality of life, and/or improved functional capacity. The Guidelines also indicate that with chronic low back pain, opioid therapy "Appears to be efficacious but limited for short-term pain relief, and long-term efficacy is unclear (> 16 weeks), but also appears limited." Additionally, "There is also no evidence that opioids showed long-term benefit or improvement in function when used as treatment for chronic back pain." Opioids are not recommended for more than 2 weeks and the Guidelines further indicate that tramadol is not recommended as a first-line oral analgesic. This injured worker has been on tramadol in excess of 16 weeks. The documentation submitted lacked a number of the elements listed above, including the level of functional improvement afforded by the chronic opioid therapy in view of the recommendations to avoid long-term therapy; likewise, that other first-line oral analgesics have been tried and failed. Therefore, the record does not document the medical necessity for tramadol.