

Case Number:	CM14-0189557		
Date Assigned:	11/20/2014	Date of Injury:	03/07/2008
Decision Date:	01/08/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/14/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/13/2014

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 and 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:

Patient is a 59 year-old male with date of injury 03/07/2008. The medical document associated with the request for authorization, a primary treating physician's progress report, dated 09/17/2014, lists subjective complaints as pain in the low back. Objective findings: Examination of the lumbar spine revealed tenderness to palpation with stiffness and tightness of the paravertebral muscles, left greater than right side. Range of motion was limited in all directions with pain at the extremes of range. Straight leg raising test was positive on the right side. Deep tendon reflexes were 1+ bilaterally in the knee and ankle jerks. Motor examination was 4/5 for the bilateral lower extremities. Sensation was intact to light touch and pinprick in all dermatomes in the bilateral lower extremities. Diagnosis includes sprain/strain of the lumbar spine, insomnia, depression, constipation and sexual dysfunction. The medical records supplied for review document that the patient has been taking the following medication for at least as far back as six months. Medication: 1. Norco 10/325mg, #120 SIG: 1 tab by mouth every 6 hours 2. Ambien 5mg, #30 SIG: 1 tab by mouth before bed.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 1 Tab By Mouth Every 6 Hours #120: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 74-94.

Decision rationale: The Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that continued or long-term use of opioids should be based on documented pain relief and functional improvement or improved quality of life. Despite the long-term use of narcotics, the patient has reported very little functional improvement over the course of the last 6 months. Norco 10/325mg 1 tab by mouth every 6 hours #120 is not medically necessary.

Ambien 5 MG 1 Tab By Mouth Every Hour #30: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG)

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain (Chronic), Zolpidem (Ambien®)

Decision rationale: The Official Disability Guidelines do not recommend the use of sleeping pills for long-term use. While sleeping pills, so-called minor tranquilizers, and anti-anxiety agents are commonly prescribed in chronic pain, pain specialists rarely, if ever, recommend them for long-term use. They can be habit-forming, and they may impair function and memory more than opioid pain relievers. There is also concern that they may increase pain and depression over the long-term. The patient has been taking Ambien for longer than the 2-6 week period recommended by the ODG. Ambien 5 mg 1 tab by mouth every hour #30 is not medically necessary.