

Case Number:	CM14-0194820		
Date Assigned:	12/02/2014	Date of Injury:	06/05/2004
Decision Date:	01/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/24/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/20/2014

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 Emergency Medicine 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 patient is a 33-year-old male who was injured on June 5, 2004. The patient continued to experience low back pain. Physical examination was notable for antalgic gait, normal bilateral lower extremity strength, intact sensation, tenderness over the paraspinal muscles, pain with lumbar flexion and extension, and positive straight leg raise. Diagnoses included chronic low back pain, lumbar degenerative disc disease, lumbar radiculopathy, lumbar post laminectomy syndrome, and depressive disorder. Treatment included medication, surgery, spinal cord stimulator, and home exercise program. Request for authorization for Ambien 12.5 mg at bedtime as needed was submitted for consideration.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Ambien CR 12.5 mg 1 tab by mouth at Bedtime as Needed: 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, Zolpidem

Decision rationale: Ambien is zolpidem, a prescription short-acting nonbenzodiazepine hypnotic, which is approved for the short-term (usually two to six weeks) treatment of insomnia.

Proper sleep hygiene is critical to the individual with chronic pain and often is hard to obtain. Various medications may provide short-term benefit. 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. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) should be an important part of an insomnia treatment plan. A study of patients with persistent insomnia found that the addition of zolpidem immediate release to CBT was modestly beneficial during acute (first 6 weeks) therapy, but better long-term outcomes were achieved when zolpidem IR was discontinued and maintenance CBT continued. Zolpidem is linked to a sharp increase in ED visits, so it should be used safely for only a short period of time. In this case the patient had been prescribed the Ambien since at least December 2013. The duration of treatment surpasses the recommended short-term duration of two to six weeks. The request should not be authorized.