

Case Number:	CM14-0197959		
Date Assigned:	12/05/2014	Date of Injury:	05/05/2009
Decision Date:	01/23/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/13/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/24/2014

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 Internal Medicine, has a subspecialty in HPM and is licensed to practice in Pennsylvania. 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:

This is a 36-year-old woman with a work related back injury dated 05/05/2009 after helping a patient while working as a Certified Nursing Assistant. According to a pain management visit note dated 10/29/2014, the injured worker presented with complaints of back pain and sciatic pain. Diagnoses included lumbosacral radiculopathy, lumbosacral degenerative joint disease, and lumbosacral degenerative disc disease. Treatment recommendations included hot and ice packs, exercises, and medications. A Utilization Review decision was rendered on 11/13/2014 recommending non-certification for the request for Vicodin (hydrocodone with acetaminophen) 5/300mg citing California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule Guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Vicodin Tab 5mg/300mg: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids; Weaning of Medications Page(s): 74-95; 124.

Decision rationale: Vicodin (hydrocodone with acetaminophen) is a combination medication in the opioid and pain reliever classes. The MTUS Guidelines stress the lowest possible dose of

opioid medications should be prescribed to improve pain and function, and monitoring of outcomes over time should affect treatment decisions. The Guidelines recommend that the total opioid daily dose should be lower than 120mg oral morphine equivalents. Documentation of pain assessments should include the current pain intensity, the lowest intensity of pain since the last assessment, the average pain intensity, pain intensity after taking the opioid medication, the amount of time it takes to achieve pain relief after taking the opioid medication, and the length of time the pain relief lasts. Acceptable results include improved function, decreased pain, and/or improved quality of life. The MTUS Guidelines recommend opioids be continued when the worker has returned to work and if the worker has improved function and pain control. When these criteria are not met, a slow individualized taper of medication is recommended to avoid withdrawal symptoms. The submitted and reviewed records indicated the worker was experiencing lower back pain that went into both legs. The documented pain assessment contained few of the elements recommended by the Guidelines. There was no discussion detailing significant benefit with the use of this medication. In the absence of such evidence, the current request for an infinite supply of Vicodin (hydrocodone with acetaminophen) 5/300mg is not medically necessary. Because the potentially serious risks outweigh the benefits in this situation based on the submitted and reviewed documentation, an individualized taper should be able to be completed with the medication the worker has available.