

Case Number:	CM15-0136162		
Date Assigned:	07/24/2015	Date of Injury:	02/01/1999
Decision Date:	08/31/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/01/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/14/2015

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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:
 State(s) of Licensure: California, District of Columbia, Maryland
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

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 62 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on February 1, 1999. He reported an injury to his spine. The injured worker was currently diagnosed as having status post cervical spine surgery with residual symptoms, status post lumbar spine surgery with residual symptoms, failed back syndrome, lower extremity radiculopathy, nodules with drainage and psychological sequelae secondary to industrial injury. Treatment to date has included lumbar brace, diagnostic studies, medications, physical therapy and surgery. On January 30, 2015, the injured worker complained of continued pain and stiffness to his cervical spine. He also complains of persistent pain to his lumbar spine radiating down both lower extremities with numbness, tingling and weakness to the legs. The injured worker also reported ongoing anxiety, depression, stress, and difficulty sleeping and sexual dysfunction. The treatment plan included a referral to a pain management physician. On July 1, 2015, Utilization Review non-certified the request for Methadone 5 mg #90, citing California MTUS Guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Methadone 5mg #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 61-62 and 124.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 61, 78.

Decision rationale: With regard to methadone, the MTUS CPMTG states: "Recommended as a second-line drug for moderate to severe pain if the potential benefit outweighs the risk. The FDA reports that they have received reports of severe morbidity and mortality with this medication. This appears, in part, secondary to the long half-life of the drug (8-59 hours). Pain relief on the other hand only lasts from 4-8 hours. Methadone should only be prescribed by providers experienced in using it." Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding on-going management of opioids "Four domains have been proposed as most relevant for ongoing monitoring of chronic pain patients on opioids: Pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant (or non-adherent) drug related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the 4 A's (Analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and any aberrant drug-taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs." Review of the available medical records reveals no documentation to support the medical necessity of methadone nor any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains, which is a recommended practice for the on-going management of opioids. Specifically, the notes do not appropriately review and document pain relief, functional status improvement, appropriate medication use, or side effects. The MTUS considers this list of criteria for initiation and continuation of opioids in the context of efficacy required to substantiate medical necessity, and they do not appear to have been addressed by the treating physician in the documentation available for review. Efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. UDS dated 6/14/15 was positive for oxycodone and OxyContin, negative for methadone and Klonopin and positive for THC. As MTUS recommends to discontinue opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed. Furthermore, the medical records indicate that the injured worker has breached the pain contract.