

Case Number:	CM15-0140038		
Date Assigned:	07/29/2015	Date of Injury:	09/04/2013
Decision Date:	09/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/09/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/20/2015

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:

This 42 year old man sustained an industrial injury on 9-4-2013 after being involved in a head-on collision with two motor vehicles. Evaluations include electromyogram and nerve conduction studies dated 7-10-2014, lumbar spine x-rays dated 3-12-2015, and undated lumbar spine MRI. Diagnoses include lumbar sprain with radiculopathy. Treatment has included oral medications, physical therapy, chiropractic care, and epidural steroid injection. Physician notes dated 5-21-2015 show complaints of upper and low back pain. Recommendations include Naprosyn, Ultram, Elavil, Norco, bilateral electromyogram and nerve conduction studies of the bilateral lower extremities, and follow up in four weeks.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Tramadol Hcl 50mg #180: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use / Opioids, specific drug list Page(s): 78-80, 93-94 and 124.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 78, 93.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding ongoing 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 tramadol nor any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains; which is a recommended practice for the ongoing 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. Furthermore, efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. There is no documentation comprehensively addressing this concern in the records available for my review. As MTUS recommends discontinuing opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed and therefore is not medically necessary.

Cyclobenzaprine Hcl 5mg #30: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle relaxants (for pain) Page(s): 63-64.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle relaxants Page(s): 63-64.

Decision rationale: With regard to muscle relaxants, the MTUS CPMTG states: "Recommend non-sedating muscle relaxants with caution as a second-line option for short-term treatment of acute exacerbations in patients with chronic LBP. (Chou, 2007) (Mens, 2005) (Van Tulder, 1998) (Van Tulder, 2003) (Van Tulder, 2006) (Schnitzer, 2004) (See, 2008) Muscle relaxants may be effective in reducing pain and muscle tension, and increasing mobility. However, in most LBP cases, they show no benefit beyond NSAIDs in pain and overall improvement," regarding Cyclobenzaprine: "Recommended for a short course of therapy. Limited, mixed-evidence does not allow for a recommendation for chronic use. Cyclobenzaprine is a skeletal muscle relaxant and a central nervous system depressant with similar effects to tricyclic antidepressants (e.g. amitriptyline). Cyclobenzaprine is more effective than placebo in the management of back pain, although the effect is modest and comes at the price of adverse effects." Per p41 of the MTUS guidelines, the effect is greatest in the first 4 days of treatment, suggesting that shorter courses may be better. Treatment is recommended for the treatment of acute spasm limited to a maximum of 2-3 weeks. UDS that evaluate for cyclobenzaprine can provide additional data on whether the injured worker is compliant, however in this case there is no UDS testing for cyclobenzaprine. The documentation submitted for review indicates that the injured worker has been using this medication since at least 10/2014. Per progress note dated 5/2015, it was noted that it was to be discontinued. There is no documentation of the patients' specific functional level or percent improvement with treatment with cyclobenzaprine. As it is recommended only for short-term use, medical necessity cannot be affirmed and therefore is not medically necessary.