

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0168897		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/09/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/20/2004
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/07/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	07/31/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/27/2015

### 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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

### 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 57 year old female who sustained an injury on 9-20-04. A review of the medical records indicates the IW is has chronic pain in her lumbar spine and chronic right lower leg pain that has associated aching and weakness. Diagnoses include cervicgia and lumbago. Ultram 50mg has been prescribed since at least 12-17-12. Other medications included Norco, Lexapro, and Voltaren. Neurontin 100 mg twice a day then 1 three times with 2 refills was requested on 2-3-14. Her symptoms at that visit included back pain, joint pain, joint stiffness, morning stiffness, numbness and tingling. She was using a cane and she reported persistent tingling more than numbness. Per the medical record on 2-12-15 her symptoms remain the same and it was noted that the burring associated with numbness and tingling was improved with the increase in Neurontin. Her pain was rated 6 out of 10. Neurontin 300 mg 2 capsules per day; and Ultram 50 mg were continued and noted on 5-14-15 and on 5-19-15 the Neurontin was increased from 900 mg to 1200 mg for her legs burning pain and hyperesthesia. The physical examination reports light touch sensation is decreased over medial foot, lateral calf lateral thigh 1st toe and 2nd toe on the right side. Her pain is still rated moderate to severe and the pain medications decrease her pain with 50 %. She is able to perform her activities of daily living with medication. The current PR2 from 7-21-15 reports the symptoms are the same along with the same sensory examination results. She can't walk on heel, cant's walk on toes and straight leg raising test if positive on the right side in sitting at 50 degrees. She was able to perform light activities of daily living and cannot function without her medications. Current requested treatments Neurontin 300 mg #120 with 3 refills- Ultram 50 mg #60 with 2 refills. The utilization review 7-31-15; 1 prescription of Neurontin 300 mg #120 with 3 refills- modified to 1 prescription of Neurontin

300 mg #120 with 2 refills; 1 prescription of Ultram 50 mg #60 with 2 refills was non-certified between 7-21-15 and 10-27-15

### **IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES**

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

**Neurontin 300mg #120 with 3 refills: Overturned**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Antiepilepsy drugs (AEDs).

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on Neurontin states: Gabapentin (Neurontin, Gabarone, generic available) has been shown to be effective for treatment of diabetic painful neuropathy and postherpetic neuralgia and has been considered as a first-line treatment for neuropathic pain. (Backonja, 2002) (ICSI, 2007) (Knotkova, 2007) (Eisenberg, 2007) (Attal, 2006) This RCT concluded that gabapentin monotherapy appears to be efficacious for the treatment of pain and sleep interference associated with diabetic peripheral neuropathy and exhibits positive effects on mood and quality of life. (Backonja, 1998) It has been given FDA approval for treatment of post-herpetic neuralgia. The number needed to treat (NNT) for overall neuropathic pain is 4. It has a more favorable side-effect profile than Carbamazepine, with a number needed to harm of 2.5. (Wiffen2-Cochrane, 2005) (Zaremba, 2006) Gabapentin in combination with morphine has been studied for treatment of diabetic neuropathy and postherpetic neuralgia. When used in combination the maximum tolerated dosage of both drugs was lower than when each was used as a single agent and better analgesia occurred at lower doses of each. (Gilron-NEJM, 2005) Recommendations involving combination therapy require further study. The patient has the diagnosis of neuropathic pain in the form of radiculopathy. Therefore, the request is medically necessary and approved.

**Ultram 50mg #60 with 2 refills: Overturned**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids for chronic pain.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on opioids states for ongoing management: On-Going Management. Actions Should Include: (a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed, and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. (b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. (c) Office: Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Information from family members or other caregivers should be considered in determining the patient's response to treatment. The 4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring:

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 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. (Passik, 2000) (d) Home: To aid in pain and functioning assessment, the patient should be requested to keep a pain diary that includes entries such as pain triggers, and incidence of end-of-dose pain. It should be emphasized that using this diary will help in tailoring the opioid dose. This should not be a requirement for pain management. (e) Use of drug screening or inpatient treatment with issues of abuse, addiction, or poor pain control. (f) Documentation of misuse of medications (doctor-shopping, uncontrolled drug escalation, drug diversion). (g) Continuing review of overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control. (h) Consideration of a consultation with a multidisciplinary pain clinic if doses of opioids are required beyond what is usually required for the condition or pain does not improve on opioids in 3 months. Consider a psych consult if there is evidence of depression, anxiety or irritability.

Consider an addiction medicine consult if there is evidence of substance misuse. When to Continue Opioids. (a) If the patient has returned to work. (b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain. (Washington, 2002) (Colorado, 2002) (Ontario, 2000) (VA/DoD, 2003) (Maddox- AAPM/APS, 1997) (Wisconsin, 2004) (Warfield, 2004). The long-term use of this medication class is not recommended per the California MTUS unless there documented evidence of benefit with measurable outcome measures and improvement in function. These criteria have been met in the provided documentation for review and the request is medically necessary.