

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0186414		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/28/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	12/02/2005
<b>Decision Date:</b>	11/03/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/24/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	09/22/2015

### 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(n) 57 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 12-2-05. The injured worker was diagnosed as having status post lumbar spine surgery on 10-10-06, status post left knee surgery on 3-19-06 and status post left total knee replacement on 4-29-09, cervical strain, thoracic strain, gastrointestinal upset due to pain medication and insomnia. Medical records (1-16-15 through 7-1-15) indicated 8-9 out of 10 cervical, thoracic and lumbar pain and 7-8 out of 10 bilateral knee pain. The physical exam (3-13-15 through 7-1-15) revealed a positive straight leg raise test, "slight" swelling of the left knee and decreased cervical and lumbar range of motion. Treatment to date has included acupuncture and aquatic therapy (number of sessions and dates of service not documented), a back brace, a left knee brace, Restoril and Opana. Current medications include Omeprazole, Naproxen (since at least 1-16-15) and Norco (since at least 5-13-15) and Ambien (since at least 7-1-15). As of the PR2 dated 8-3-15, the injured worker reports 9 out of 10 cervical, thoracic and lumbar pain, 7 out of 10 left knee pain and 8 out of 10 right knee pain. He indicated his pain level would be 10 out of 10 with medications and those current medications allow him to continue with everyday activities. The injured worker also noted that with Ambien he is able to sleep throughout most of the night, getting a minimum of six hours of sleep. Objective findings include a positive straight leg raise test, "slight" swelling of the left knee and decreased cervical and lumbar range of motion. The treating physician requested Naproxen 550mg, Norco 10-325mg #180 and Ambien 5mg #30. The Utilization Review dated 8-24-15, non-certified the request for Naproxen 550mg, Norco 10-325mg #180 and Ambien 5mg #30.

## IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

### **Naproxen Sodium 550mg:** 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): NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs).

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on NSAID therapy states: Recommended at the lowest dose for the shortest period in patients with moderate to severe pain. Acetaminophen may be considered for initial therapy for patients with mild to moderate pain, and in particular, for those with gastrointestinal, cardiovascular or renovascular risk factors. NSAIDs appear to be superior to acetaminophen, particularly for patients with moderate to severe pain. There is no evidence to recommend one drug in this class over another based on efficacy. In particular, there appears to be no difference between traditional NSAIDs and COX-2 NSAIDs in terms of pain relief. The main concern of selection is based on adverse effects. COX-2 NSAIDs have fewer GI side effects at the risk of increased cardiovascular side effects, although the FDA has concluded that long-term clinical trials are best interpreted to suggest that cardiovascular risk occurs with all NSAIDs and is a class effect (with naproxyn being the safest drug). There is no evidence of long-term effectiveness for pain or function. (Chen, 2008) (Laine, 2008) Back Pain - Chronic low back pain: Recommended as an option for short-term symptomatic relief. A Cochrane review of the literature on drug relief for low back pain (LBP) suggested that NSAIDs were no more effective than other drugs such as acetaminophen, narcotic analgesics, and muscle relaxants. The review also found that NSAIDs had more adverse effects than placebo and acetaminophen but fewer effects than muscle relaxants and narcotic analgesics. In addition, evidence from the review suggested that no one NSAID, including COX-2 inhibitors, was clearly more effective than another. (Roelofs-Cochrane, 2008) See also Anti-inflammatory medications. Neuropathic pain: There is inconsistent evidence for the use of these medications to treat long term neuropathic pain, but they may be useful to treat breakthrough and mixed pain conditions such as osteoarthritis (and other nociceptive pain) in with neuropathic pain. This medication is recommended for the shortest period of time and at the lowest dose possible. The dosing of this medication is within the California MTUS guideline recommendations. The definition of shortest period possible is not clearly defined in the California MTUS. Therefore, the request is medically necessary.

### **Norco 10/325mg #180:** Upheld

**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. There is no documented significant decrease in objective pain measures such as VAS scores for significant periods of time. There are no objective measures of improvement of function or how the medication improves activities. The work status is not mentioned. Therefore, all criteria for the ongoing use of opioids have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.

**Ambien 5mg #30:** 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), Pain (chronic): Zolpidem (Ambien), (2015).

**MAXIMUS guideline:** The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Ambien.

**Decision rationale:** The California MTUS and the ACOEM do not specifically address the requested medication. PER the ODG: Zolpidem is a prescription short-acting non-benzodiazepine hypnotic approved for the short-term treatment of insomnia. Proper sleep hygiene is critical to the individual with chronic pain. While sleeping pills, so-called minor tranquilizers and anti-anxiety medications are commonly prescribed in chronic pain, pain specialists rarely, if ever, recommend them for long-term use. There is also concern that they may increase pain and depression over the long-term. The medication is not intended for use greater than 6 weeks. There is no notation or rationale given for longer use in the provided

progress reports. There is no documentation of other preferred long-term insomnia intervention choices being tried and failed. For these reasons, the request is not medically necessary.