

Case Number:	CM15-0187590		
Date Assigned:	09/29/2015	Date of Injury:	06/03/2003
Decision Date:	11/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/24/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/23/2015

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 48-year-old male who sustained an industrial injury 06-03-03. A review of the medical records reveals the injured worker is undergoing treatment for mechanical low back pain status post disc replacement, facet-mediated pain stat post bilateral rhizotomy, bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome, mental health issues, and chronic pain. Medical records (08-12-15) reveal the injured worker complains of mid and low back pain, rated at 7/10 without mention of medications. The physical exam (08-07-15) reveals moderate tenderness to palpation along the lumbar facets at L4-S1 with tenderness at the cervical spine midline and bilateral paraspinals. Range of motion of the cervical and lumbar spines is decreased throughout. Prior treatment includes 30 sessions of physical therapy, 9 sessions of chiropractic therapy, 20 sessions of acupuncture, massage therapy, local heat and ice, traction, a left L5-S1 median branch block, rhizotomy, lumbar epidural steroid injection, medications, and lumbar disc replacement L3-4 and L5-S1. The treating provider reports the lumbar spine MRI (06-24-13) shows degenerative disk disease and facet arthropathy with postoperative changes L4-5 moderate right mild to moderate left neural foraminal narrowing and degenerative disc disease in the distal thoracic spine with a small protrusion at T12-L1. The electrodiagnostic studies of the bilateral upper extremities (11-03-11) shows evidence of borderline left ulnar neuropathy at the elbow affecting motor components. The original utilization review (08-24-15) non-certified the request for cyclobenzaprine 7.5mg #60 and Norco 10/325 #90.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cyclobenzaprine 7.5mg #60: 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): Muscle relaxants (for pain).

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. The documentation submitted for review indicates that the injured worker has been using this medication 3/2015. There is no documentation of the patient's specific functional level or percent improvement with treatment with cyclobenzaprine. As it is recommended only for short-term use, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.

Norco 10/325mg #90: 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, criteria for use.

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 insufficient documentation to support the medical necessity of Norco nor sufficient 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 functional status improvement, 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. It was noted per the medical records, that the injured worker rated pain 8/10 without medications and 6/10 with medications efforts to rule

out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. UDS performed 3/14/15 was consistent with prescribed medications. As MTUS recommends to discontinue opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.