

Case Number:	CM15-0187981		
Date Assigned:	09/29/2015	Date of Injury:	04/02/1993
Decision Date:	11/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/25/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/24/2015

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 73 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 04-02-1993. Current diagnoses include chronic pain syndrome, degeneration of lumbar intervertebral disc, and knee pain. Report dated 08-17-2015 noted that the injured worker presented with complaints that included back and bilateral knee pain, and left knee locks up. Medication regimen includes Soma, hydrocodone, and Meloxicam. Pain level was 3 out of 10 on a visual analog scale (VAS). Physical examination performed on 08-17-2015 revealed tenderness, mild medial and lateral tenderness, and lumbar spine tenderness. Previous treatments included medications and surgical intervention. The treatment plan included continuing current medications and bilateral knee x-rays due to pain and stiffness. The injured worker has been prescribed Meloxicam since at least 03-10-2015. The utilization review dated 08-25-2015, non-certified the request for Meloxicam and bilateral knee x-rays.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Meloxicam 15mg #30: 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.

Bilateral Knee X-rays: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Knee Complaints 2004.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Knee Complaints 2004, Section(s): Special Studies.

Decision rationale: The ACOEM chapter on knee complaints states: The clinical parameters for ordering knee radiographs following trauma in this population are: Joint effusion within 24 hours of direct blow or fall, Palpable tenderness over fibular head or patella- Inability to walk (four steps) or bear weight immediately or within a week of the trauma, Inability to flex knee to 90 degrees. The provided physical exam only notes joint line tenderness with no significant joint effusion or inability to bear weight. There is no palpable tenderness over the fibular head or patella. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.

