

Case Number:	CM15-0194917		
Date Assigned:	10/08/2015	Date of Injury:	06/23/2011
Decision Date:	11/19/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/05/2015

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 industrial injury on 6-23-2011. The injured worker is undergoing treatment for chronic cervical strain with disc bulge, bilateral upper extremity radicular pain and numbness, lumbar disc bulge and bilateral lower extremity radicular pain. Medical records dated 8-10-2015 indicate the injured worker complains of neck, shoulder and back pain rated 7 out of 10 and unchanged from previous visit. She reports hand weakness, frequently dropping things and leg spasms. Physical exam dated 8-10-2015 notes cervical, shoulder and lumbar tenderness to palpation with shoulder and lumbar decreased range of motion (ROM) and decreased bilateral upper extremity strength. Treatment to date has included physical therapy, topical and oral medication, Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) unit and rest. The original utilization review dated 9-2-2015 indicates the request for Ultram (Tramadol) 50mg #60 and Kera-Tek gel (methyl salicylate/menthol) 4 oz. is non-certified.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Ultram (Tramadol) 50 mg Qty 60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids (Classification), Opioids for neuropathic pain.

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

Decision rationale: The California MTUS states: 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 improvement in VAS scores for significant periods of time. There are no objective measurements of improvement in function or activity specifically due to the medication. Therefore all criteria for the ongoing use of opioids have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.

Kera-Tek gel (methyl salicylate/menthol) 4 oz: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Topical Analgesics, Duragesic (fentanyl transdermal system).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Topical Analgesics.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on topical analgesics states: Recommended as an option as indicated below: Largely experimental in use with few randomized controlled trials to determine efficacy or safety, primarily recommended for neuropathic pain when trials of antidepressants and anticonvulsants have failed. (Namaka, 2004) These agents are applied locally to painful areas with advantages that include lack of systemic side effects, absence of drug interactions, and no need to titrate. (Colombo, 2006) Many agents are compounded as monotherapy or in combination for pain control (including NSAIDs, opioids, capsaicin, local anesthetics, antidepressants, glutamate receptor antagonists, adrenergic receptor agonist, adenosine, cannabinoids, cholinergic receptor agonists, agonists, prostanoids, bradykinin, adenosine triphosphate, biogenic amines, and nerve growth factor). (Argoff, 2006) There is little to no research to support the use of many of these agents. Any compounded product that contains at least one drug (or drug class) that is not recommended is not recommended. The requested medication contains ingredients, which are not indicated per the California MTUS for topical analgesic use. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.