

Case Number:	CM15-0022297		
Date Assigned:	02/11/2015	Date of Injury:	05/20/2008
Decision Date:	03/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/24/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/05/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine

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 52 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 8/20/08. He has reported back pain. The diagnoses have included cervical radiculitis, lumbar radiculitis, bilateral shoulder impingement syndrome and chronic pain syndrome. Comorbid conditions include diabetes. Treatment to date has included discectomy at L4-5 with indirect decompression of spinal canal and anterior lumbar interbody fusion at L4-5 with bone graft, physical therapy, home exercise program and oral medications. Currently, the injured worker complains of spasms of bilateral legs, low back pain, left foot pain and pain with physical therapy exercises. Per the progress report dated 12/22/14, the injured worker ambulated with a cane; wore a back brace, tenderness to palpation was noted of lumbosacral area and decreased range of motion noted of left shoulder and lumbosacral area. On 1/24/15 Utilization Review non-certified Skelaxin 800 mg #60, noting the efficacy appears to diminish over time and prolonged use may lead to dependence. In most low back pain cases, they show no benefit beyond NSAIDS in pain and overall improvement. The MTUS, ACOEM Guidelines, was cited. On 2/2/15, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of Skelaxin 800 mg #60.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Skelaxin 800mg #60: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle Relaxant.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle Relaxants Page(s): 61, 63-6.

Decision rationale: Metaxalone (Skelaxin) is a moderately strong muscle relaxant used to relax muscles and relieve pain caused by strains, sprains, and other musculoskeletal conditions. It comes as an 800 mg tablet to be used three to four times a day. This class of medications can be helpful in reducing pain and muscle tension thus increasing patient mobility but, as a group, are recommended for short-term use only, as their efficacy appears to diminish over time. In fact, the MTUS recommends use of metaxalone only for short-term pain relief from chronic low back pain. Muscle relaxants are considered no more effective at pain control than non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication (NSAIDs) and there is no study that shows combination therapy of NSAIDs with muscle relaxants has a demonstrable benefit. This patient has been on continuous muscle relaxant therapy for over 4 months (Soma) but this therapy was changed recently to Skelaxin and the prescription is for only 60 tablets to be used over a 2 month period, which obviously means it is intended for intermittent use only. There are no indications that this medication is to be used daily. Medical necessity for continued use of metaxalone has been established.