

Case Number:	CM15-0044056		
Date Assigned:	03/16/2015	Date of Injury:	06/27/2013
Decision Date:	04/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/28/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/09/2015

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: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, 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 51 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 06/27/2013. He was pushing a client on a wheelchair towards a ramp of the bus when a wheel got stuck causing him to twist his right upper extremity with an immediate onset of pain. He reports at home he began to experience worsening pain in his right upper extremity as well as neck and back pain. The injured worker presents on 02/05/2015 with complaints of neck, mid/upper back, right shoulder and right elbow pain. He also complains of lower back pain that radiates to the right lower extremity and numbness in the right wrist that radiates to the right hand. There was tenderness to palpation over the cervical, thoracic and lumbar spine. There was also tenderness on palpation of the right shoulder, right elbow and right wrist. Treatment to date includes physical therapy and medications. Diagnostic impressions were cervical musculoligamentous strain/sprain chronic with radiculitis, thoracic and lumbosacral musculoligamentous strain/sprain chronic, right shoulder impingement syndrome, right elbow lateral and medial epicondylitis and right wrist strain/sprain, chronic. The provider requested authorization for Tramadol 50 mg # 60 one tablet by mouth twice daily as needed.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Tramadol 50mg #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines
Page(s): 63-64, 80, 111-113.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Tramadol
Page(s): 94, 76-80.

Decision rationale: Tramadol is a centrally acting opioid agonist and also inhibits the reuptake of serotonin and norepinephrine. On July 2, 2014, the DEA published in the Federal Register the final rule placing tramadol into schedule IV of the Controlled Substances Act. This rule will become effective on August 18, 2014. The CPMTG specifies that this is a second line agent for neuropathic pain. Given its opioid agonist activity, it is subject to the opioid criteria specified on pages 76-80 of the CPMTG. With regard to this request, the California Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state the following about on-going management with 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 nonadherent) 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." Guidelines further recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improvement in function and reduction in pain. In the progress reports available for review, the primary treating physician did not adequately document monitoring of the four domains. Improvement in function was not clearly outlined. Furthermore, there was no discussion regarding possible aberrant drug-related behavior. There was no documentation of a signed opioid agreement, submission of results of random, periodic urine drug screens (UDS), and no recent CURES report was provided to confirm that the injured worker is only getting opioids from one practitioner. Based on the lack of documentation, medical necessity of this request cannot be established at this time. Although this opioid is not medically necessary at this time, it should not be abruptly halted, and the requesting provider should start a weaning schedule as he or she sees fit or supply the requisite monitoring documentation to continue this medication.