

Case Number:	CM15-0044980		
Date Assigned:	03/16/2015	Date of Injury:	06/17/2009
Decision Date:	04/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/27/2015
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: New Jersey, Michigan, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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 62 year old male who sustained a work related injury June 17, 2009. Past history included cervical fusion C5-6, 2011. According to a primary treating physician's progress report, dated January 21, 2015, the injured worker presented for follow-up with ongoing neck pain. He continues to have upper back pain, constant low back pain, and right knee pain. The neck pain is rated 5/10 and described as burning, stabbing, and aching with radiation to the center of his back. There is reported left arm numbness and tingling that radiates into the first three digits, and inability to sleep for long periods of time due to pain. Current medications include Tramadol 37.5mg three times a day and LidoPro. Diagnoses included L4-5 disc extrusion; lumbar radiculopathy; right shoulder bursitis; carpal tunnel symptoms, right wrist; degeneration disc disease of the cervical spine; and cervical radiculopathy. Treatment plan included discussion of surgical intervention, request for authorization for MRI of the cervical spine, Tramadol, surgery, ophthalmology consultation and orthopedic follow-up for the right knee.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

90 tablets of Tramadol/APAP 37.5/325mg: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use Page(s): 78.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for use of opioids Tramadol page(s) 113 Page(s): 76-79.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Ultram (Tramadol) is a synthetic opioid indicated for the pain management but not recommended as a first line oral analgesic. In addition and according to MTUS guidelines, ongoing use of opioids should follow specific rules: (a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed, and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. (b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. (c) Office: Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. 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 aberrant drug taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework. Although, Tramadol may be needed to help with the patient pain, there is no clear evidence of objective and recent functional and pain improvement from its previous use. There is no clear documentation of the efficacy/safety of previous use of tramadol. There is no recent evidence of objective monitoring of compliance of the patient with her medications. Therefore, the prescription of 90 tablets of Tramadol/APAP 37.5/325mg is not medically necessary.

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