

Case Number:	CM15-0045818		
Date Assigned:	03/18/2015	Date of Injury:	06/07/2007
Decision Date:	04/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/10/2015

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: Pennsylvania

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Hospice & Palliative 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 57 year old male who sustained a work related injury on June 7, 2007. He developed wrist pain from working on an assembly line. He was diagnosed with contusion of the elbow and joint pain-wrist sprain. He had a history of internal derangement of the knees and cervical radiculopathy. Treatment included pain medications, Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) unit, and viscosupplementation to the left knee, home exercise program and cognitive behavioral therapy for depression. Electromyogram studies were unremarkable. He underwent knee arthroscopy in 2011. Currently, the injured worker complained of chronic pain in his knees and wrists. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization included MS Contin Extended Release (ER).

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MS Contin 30 mg Extended release #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, Weaning of Medications Page(s): 74-95, page 124.

Decision rationale: MS Contin (morphine) is a long-acting medication in the opioid class. The MTUS Guidelines stress the lowest possible dose of opioid medications should be prescribed to improve pain and function, and monitoring of outcomes over time should affect treatment decisions. The Guidelines recommend that the total opioid daily dose should be lower than 120mg oral morphine equivalents. Documentation of pain assessments should include the current pain intensity, the lowest intensity of pain since the last assessment, the average pain intensity, pain intensity after taking the opioid medication, the amount of time it takes to achieve pain relief after taking the opioid medication, and the length of time the pain relief lasts. Acceptable results include improved function, decreased pain, and/or improved quality of life. The MTUS Guidelines recommend opioids be continued when the worker has returned to work and if the worker has improved function and pain control. When these criteria are not met, a slow individualized taper of medication is recommended to avoid withdrawal symptoms. The submitted documentation indicated the worker was experiencing knee and wrist pain, depressed mood, and anxious mood. The recorded pain assessments were minimal and contained few of the elements suggested by the Guidelines. There was no exploration of potential negative side effects, individualized risk assessment, or description of how long the minor decrease in pain intensity lasted with the medication. In the absence of such evidence, the current request for ninety tablets of MS Contin (morphine-SR) 30mg is not medically necessary. Because the potentially serious risks outweigh the benefits in this situation based on the submitted documentation, an individualized taper should be able to be completed with the medication the worker has available.