

Case Number:	CM15-0048689		
Date Assigned:	03/20/2015	Date of Injury:	12/18/2002
Decision Date:	05/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/19/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/16/2015

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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & General Preventive 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 12/18/2002. He reported a mechanical fall with bilateral knee injuries. Diagnoses include severe right knee degenerative joint disease and left knee degenerative joint disease. He is status post right knee arthroscopy in June 2003 and left knee in September 2003. Treatments to date include medication therapy, physical therapy, and home exercise including a TENS unit. Synvisc injections were approved, however, were not yet administered. Currently, they complained of bilateral knee pain, left greater than right, rated 7/10 VAS. Associated symptoms included knee locking and giving way. The provider documented 1/27/15 objective findings including bilateral knee tenderness, crepitus, and decreased range of motion and decreased strength. The plan of care included Ultram ER 150mg as ordered.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Ultram ER 150mg #30: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Guidelines Opioids, Tramadol, Ultram Page(s): 74-96, 113, 123. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain (Chronic) - Medications for acute pain (analgesics), Tramadol (Ultram).

Decision rationale: Tramadol is classified as a central acting synthetic opioids. MTUS states regarding tramadol that a therapeutic trial of opioids should not be employed until the patient has failed a trial of non-opioid analgesics. Before initiating therapy, the patient should set goals, and the continued use of opioids should be contingent on meeting these goals. ODG further states, Tramadol is not recommended as a first-line oral analgesic because of its inferior efficacy to a combination of Hydrocodone/ acetaminophen. MTUS states that ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. The treating physician does not fully document the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, intensity of pain after taking opioid, pain relief, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. The patient has been on Ultram for over four months and has not reported a decrease in pain or an increase in function. As such, the request for Ultram ER 150mg #30 is not medically necessary.