

Case Number:	CM15-0052431		
Date Assigned:	03/25/2015	Date of Injury:	01/31/2011
Decision Date:	05/04/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/12/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/20/2015

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, District of Columbia, Maryland
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, 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 66 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 1/31/11 involving his back and right knee as he tried to load furniture he bent to use his knees when his right knee gave out, holding all the weight on his back. He experienced immediate pain in the right knee and low back. He has physical and chiropractic therapy. Currently complains of low back pain. Medications include Norco, pantoprazole, gabapentin, flurbiprofen, glucosamine, Tramadol. Diagnoses include lumbar sprain/ strain with radiculopathy; right knee sprain/strain, rule out internal derangement; stress; anxiety; sleep difficulties. Treatments to date include physical and chiropractic therapy, epidural steroid injection L5-S1 on the left side, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulator unit, back brace, moist heat. Diagnostics include lumbar MRI (8/9/11, 4/22/11) with abnormalities. In the progress note dated 2/20/14, the treating provider requests Ultram.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Retrospective 120 Ultram 50mg dispensed 9/28/2012: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Tramadol (Ultram; Ultram ER; generic available in immediate release tablet).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids
Page(s): 78, 93.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding on-going management of 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 non-adherent) drug related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the '4 A's' (Analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and any 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." Review of the available medical records reveals neither documentation to support the medical necessity of Ultram nor any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains, which is a recommended practice for the on-going management of opioids. Specifically, the notes do not appropriately review and document pain relief, functional status improvement, appropriate medication use, or side effects. The MTUS considers this list of criteria for initiation and continuation of opioids in the context of efficacy required to substantiate medical necessity, and they do not appear to have been addressed by the treating physician in the documentation available for review. Efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. The most recent documentation of UDS was dated 8/2013. As MTUS recommends discontinuing opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed. Therefore, this request is not medically necessary.