

Case Number:	CM15-0083682		
Date Assigned:	05/05/2015	Date of Injury:	08/20/1985
Decision Date:	06/04/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/22/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/01/2015

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 64 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 8/20/85. The injured worker was diagnosed as having displacement of lumbar intervertebral disc without myelopathy and displacement of cervical intervertebral disc without myelopathy. Treatment to date has included 2 lumbar epidural steroid injections, 2 cervical epidural steroid injections, water aerobics, and medications including Gabapentin and Nucynta. The latest cervical epidural steroid injection administered on 5/21/13 provided 75% reduction in pain. The injured worker had been taking Nucynta 50mg since at least 9/18/14, at that time pain was rated as 4/10 and 6/10 at the worst. On 12/22/14 pain was rated as 3/10 and 6/10 at worst. On 3/19/15 pain was rated as 3/10 and 6/10 at worst. Currently, the injured worker complains of neck pain on the left with limited motion and some spasm. The treating physician requested authorization for Nucynta 50mg #90.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Nucynta 50mg Qty: 90.00: 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 8 C.C.R. 9792.20 - 9792.26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) Page(s): 44, 47, 75-79, 120 of 127.

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for tapentadol (Nucynta), California Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that this is an opiate pain medication. Due to high abuse potential, close follow-up is recommended with documentation of analgesic effect, objective functional improvement, side effects, and discussion regarding any aberrant use. Guidelines go on to recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improved function and pain. Within the documentation available for review, there is no indication that the medication is improving the patient's function or pain (in terms of specific examples of functional improvement and percent reduction in pain or reduced NRS), no documentation regarding side effects, and no discussion regarding aberrant use. As such, there is no clear indication for ongoing use of the medication. Opioids should not be abruptly discontinued, but unfortunately, there is no provision to modify the current request to allow tapering. In light of the above issues, the currently requested tapentadol (Nucynta) is not medically necessary.