

Case Number:	CM15-0085329		
Date Assigned:	05/07/2015	Date of Injury:	01/06/2011
Decision Date:	06/18/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/11/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/04/2015

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 (IW) is a 41-year-old male who sustained an industrial injury on 01/06/2011. Diagnoses include chronic low back pain with normal MRI. Treatments to date included medications and physical therapy. According to the progress notes dated 4/1/15, the Injured Worker reported aching, stabbing pain in the low back and left leg rated 7-8/10 with medication and 8-9/10 without medication. He was participating in his second round of acupuncture and reported it was helpful, relieving pain for two to three days after each treatment. He also reported Flexeril was helping his muscle spasms and Tramadol was helpful for pain flare-ups. He was working full time. A request was made for Ultram 50mg, #100.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Ultram 50mg quantity 100: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Ultram, Opioids Page(s): 76-80, 94.

Decision rationale: Tramadol is a centrally acting opioid agonist and also inhibits the reuptake of serotonin and norepinephrine. On July 2, 2014, the DEA published in the Federal Register the final rule placing tramadol into schedule IV of the Controlled Substances Act. This rule will become effective on August 18, 2014. The CPMTG specifies that this is a second line agent for neuropathic pain. Given its opioid agonist activity, it is subject to the opioid criteria specified on pages 76-80 of the CPMTG. With regard to this request, the California Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state the following about on-going management with 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 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." Guidelines further recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improvement in function and reduction in pain. In the progress reports available for review, the primary treating physician did not adequately document a clear cut rationale for a change to a similar agent. The patient had been on Ultracet which is a tramadol and acetaminophen combination. The patient did not experience significant benefit from this and therefore the plan was to switch to tramadol. No rationale was provided as to how switching to a component of a previously failed combination agent would help in the note from 2/5/2015. The medical necessity of this request cannot be established at this time. Although this opioid is not medically necessary at this time, it should not be abruptly halted, and the requesting provider should start a weaning schedule as he or she sees fit or supply the requisite monitoring documentation to continue this medication.