

Case Number:	CM15-0085433		
Date Assigned:	05/07/2015	Date of Injury:	02/05/2007
Decision Date:	06/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/10/2015
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: Florida

Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, 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 47-year-old male injured worker suffered an industrial injury on 2/05/2007. The diagnoses included cervical intervertebral disc displacement without myelopathy and post-cervical laminectomy syndrome. The diagnostics included cervical magnetic resonance imaging and x-rays. The injured worker had been treated with medications. On 3/18/2015, the treating provider reported worsening neck pain with upper extremity radiations and numbness that continued to be severe rated as 7 to 8/10. On exam there is significant mid cervical tenderness with restricted range of motion. There was diminished sensation to the right radial forearm, thumb and index finger. The treatment plan included Norco and Xanax.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg, #240: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioid Page(s): 80-81.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation official disability guidelines - pain, opioids.

Decision rationale: ODG guidelines support opioids with: 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. Information from family members or other caregivers should be considered in determining the patient's response to treatment. The 4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring: 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. The medical records report chronic pain but does not document ongoing opioid risk mitigation tool use in support of chronic therapy congruent with ODG guidelines. As such, chronic opioids are not supported.

Xanax 0.5mg, #67: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 24.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation official disability guidelines - pain, benzodiazepines.

Decision rationale: ODG guidelines support xanax is not recommended for long-term use because long-term efficacy is unproven and there is a risk of psychological and physical dependence or frank addiction. Most guidelines limit use to 4 weeks. Benzodiazepines are a major cause of overdose, particularly as they act synergistically with other drugs such as opioids (mixed overdoses are often a cause of fatalities). Their range of action includes sedative/hypnotic, anxiolytic, anticonvulsant, and muscle relaxant. Chronic benzodiazepines are the treatment of choice in very few conditions. Tolerance to hypnotic effects develops rapidly (3- 14 day). Tolerance to anxiolytic effects occurs within months and long-term use may actually increase anxiety. A more appropriate treatment for anxiety disorder is an antidepressant. The medical records provided for review do not document the presence of an anxiety condition shown to benefit from long term therapy with the requested medication and is not supported under ODG guidelines for use in pain or spasm.