

Case Number:	CM15-0089087		
Date Assigned:	05/13/2015	Date of Injury:	02/16/2015
Decision Date:	06/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/20/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/08/2015

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

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 59-year-old female injured worker suffered an industrial injury on 02/16/2005. The diagnoses included knee pain with replacement, lumbar degenerative disc disease with fusion, myofascial pain, and depression. The injured worker had been treated with medications. On 3/11/2015 the treating provider reported she was in constant pain for 3 weeks after holding her 4 month old grandson while sitting up for 2 hours. She reported she and been losing her balance and fell at home, catching on a piece of furniture before she hit the floor. She reported progressive symptoms and developed dizziness with turning her head. The injured worker said her symptoms were worsening and difficulty maintaining pain control. The pain was in the neck, left shoulder, low back, left knee, left leg, right and left foot. She gets 90% relief with current medications regime. The treatment plan included Oxycodone, Xanax and Duragesic patch.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Oxycodone 20 mg #15/month #30 1 refill: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page(s) 74-96.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The Oxycodone 20 mg #15/month #30 1 refill is not medically necessary and appropriate.

Xanax 0.5 mg #120 3 refills for 480: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Benzodiazepines, page 24.

Decision rationale: Xanax Tablets (Alprazolam) is indicated for the management of anxiety disorder. Anxiety or tension associated with the stress of everyday life usually does not require treatment with an anxiolytic. Alprazolam is an anti-anxiety medication in the benzodiazepine family, which inhibits many of the activities of the brain, as it is believed that excessive activity in the brain may lead to anxiety or other psychiatric disorders. Per the Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines, benzodiazepines are not recommended for long-term use because long-term efficacy is unproven and there is a risk of dependence. Most guidelines limit use to 4 weeks as chronic benzodiazepines are the treatment of choice in very few conditions and tolerance to hypnotic effects develops rapidly. The Xanax 0.5 mg #120 3 refills for 480 is not medically necessary and appropriate.

Duragesic patch 100 mcg 15/month #30 1 refill: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page(s) page 74-96.

Decision rationale: Fentanyl is an ultra-potent opioid, specifically cited as not recommended noting no research-based pharmacological or clinical reason to prescribe for trans-dermal fentanyl (Duragesic) for patients with CNMP (chronic non-malignant pain). Submitted reports have not demonstrated the indication for Fentanyl for this chronic, non-malignant injury without functional improvement from treatment already rendered. Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain. The Duragesic patch 100 mcg 15/month #30 1 refill is not medically necessary and appropriate.