

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0132498		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	08/22/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	04/29/2009
<b>Decision Date:</b>	09/22/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	07/22/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/19/2014

### 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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and is licensed to practice in California. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

### CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

This 53 year-old patient sustained a repetitive lifting injury on 4/29/09 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Tramadol ER 150mg #60. Conservative care has included chiropractic treatment, physical therapy, acupuncture, lumbar epidural steroid injections x2 (no relief), medications, and modified activities/rest. MRI of lumbar spine in 2012 showed annular tear and disc protrusion at L4-S1. Report of 3/28/14 from the provider noted the patient with constant ongoing low back pain radiating to lower extremities associated with numbness and tingling; constant bilateral elbow and knee pain rated at 8-9/10 to 5-6/10 with medications. Medications list Methadone gel, Kerrison patch, Alprazolam, Tramadol ER, Sentra AM/PM, Theramine, Omeprazole, Gabadone, and Norco along with Toradol and B12 injection. Report of 5/19/14 noted recommendation for repeating lumbar spine MRI with diagnoses for L4-5 instability grade I to II. The request(s) for Tramadol ER 150mg #60 was not medically necessary on 7/22/14 citing guidelines criteria and lack of medical necessity.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Tramadol ER 150mg #60:** 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 work 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 Tramadol ER 150mg #60 is not medically necessary and appropriate.