

Case Number:	CM14-0185209		
Date Assigned:	11/13/2014	Date of Injury:	05/29/2006
Decision Date:	12/19/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/31/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/06/2014

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 Occupational Medicine 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:

The applicant is a represented [REDACTED] employee who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain and an inguinal hernia reportedly associated with an industrial injury of May 29, 2006. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; earlier cervical spine surgery; transfer of care to and from various providers in various specialties; inguinal hernia repair surgery; and unspecified amounts of physical therapy over the course of the claim. In a Utilization Review Report dated October 31, 2014, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Halcion, a benzodiazepine anxiolytic medication. The claims administrator stated that its decision was based on an October 27, 2014 Request For Authorization (RFA) form. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. Electrodiagnostic testing of cervical and upper extremities of September 11, 2014 was interpreted as negative. In an October 27, 2014 progress note, the applicant presented with a primary diagnosis of chronic low back pain. The applicant was placed off of work, on total temporary disability. Xanax, Nucynta, Duragesic, Soma, Halcion, and Norco were renewed. It was suggested that the applicant would use Halcion nightly, seemingly for sedative effects. In an earlier note dated July 14, 2014, it was acknowledged that the applicant was off of work, on total temporary disability. The applicant was reportedly wheelchair bound. The applicant last worked in May 2006. The applicant was using Halcion nightly, Norco six times daily, Duragesic once a day, Nucynta twice daily, and six tablets of Xanax daily, it was acknowledged.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Halcion .25 mg #60 Every Night at Bedtime with No Refills: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 15 Stress Related Conditions Page(s): 402, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Functional Restoration Approach to Chronic Pain Management Page(s): 7.

Decision rationale: While the MTUS Guideline in ACOEM Chapter 15, page 402 does acknowledge that anxiolytics such as Halcion may be appropriate for "brief periods," in cases of overwhelming symptoms. In this case, however, all evidence on file points to the applicant's using Halcion for chronic, long-term, and/or nightly-use purposes, for sedative-effect purposes. This is not an ACOEM-endorsed role for Halcion. It is further noted that page 7 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines stipulates that an attending provider incorporate some discussion of applicant-specific variables such as "other medications" into his choice of pharmacotherapy. Here, however, the attending provider failed to state why the applicant needed to use Halcion, a benzodiazepine anxiolytic, in conjunction with a second benzodiazepine anxiolytic, Xanax. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.