

Case Number:	CM14-0093820		
Date Assigned:	07/28/2014	Date of Injury:	12/10/2008
Decision Date:	10/02/2014	UR Denial Date:	06/04/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/19/2014

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 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 reportedly associated with an industrial injury of December 10, 2008. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with analgesic medications; attorney representation; opioid therapy, adjuvant medications; and topical agent. In a Utilization Review Report dated June 4, 2014, the claims administrator partially certified a request for Dilaudid, reportedly for weaning purposes. In an April 4, 2014 progress note, the applicant reported an average pain score of 9/10, exacerbated by lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, gripping, grasping, bending, and carrying. The applicant stated that 90% of the pain was axial in nature while the remaining 10% of her pain complaints were radicular in nature. The applicant was avoiding socializing, exercising, household chores, recreation, and shopping, it was stated. The applicant was not working, it was further noted. Dilaudid, Ativan, and Zantac were endorsed. The applicant was obese, with a BMI of 35. It appeared that the medications at issue were renewal request, although this was not readily apparent. On May 9, 2014, the applicant acknowledged that Dilaudid was only providing "minimal" relief. Likewise, the applicant reported that Gabapentin was minimally helpful and that Robaxin was overly sedating. The applicant was also using Ativan. Multiple medications were renewed. TENS unit, electrodiagnostic testing, and CT scanning of the cervical spine were sought. The applicant was permanent and stationary with permanent limitations in place. The applicant did not appear to be working.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Dilaudid 4mg, qty 30: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 13, 16-22, 66, 78, 107.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

Decision rationale: As noted on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the cardinal criteria for continuation of opioid therapy include evidence of successful return to work, improved functioning, and/or reduced pain achieved as a result of the same. In this case, however, the applicant is off of work, despite ongoing Dilaudid usage. The applicant's pain complaints appear to be heightened from visit-to-visit, as opposed to reduced, despite ongoing usage of the same. The attending provider has failed to outline any meaningful improvement in function achieved as a result of ongoing medication usage, including ongoing Dilaudid usage. The attending provider himself acknowledged in May 2014 that Dilaudid was minimally efficacious. Continuing the same, on balance, does not appear to be indicated. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.