

Case Number:	CM15-0100379		
Date Assigned:	06/02/2015	Date of Injury:	03/27/2007
Decision Date:	06/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/28/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/26/2015

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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 injured worker is a 66 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 03/27/2007. According to a medical legal evaluation report dated 04/16/2015, the injured worker was re-evaluated for chronic right shoulder pain. Exacerbating factors included prolonged sitting, lifting, driving, lying down and bearing down. Mitigating factors included lying down on back, standing and medications. Current medications included Norco and Ambien. Prior medications included Restoril, Klonopin, Prozac and Clonazepam. Diagnoses included rotator cuff re-tear, right shoulder internal derangement, right shoulder contusion, right shoulder pain, decreased sleep secondary to chronic right shoulder pain, depression and anxiety secondary to chronic shoulder pain, right shoulder degenerative joint disease, right foraminal disc protrusion at C3-C4 measuring 3 millimeters with moderate right neural foraminal stenosis, central disc protrusion at C4-C5 measuring 3 millimeters with moderate central stenosis, central disc protrusion at C5-C6 measuring 2 millimeters, bilateral moderate to severe C5 neural foraminal stenosis right worse than left, moderate to severe left C6 neural foraminal stenosis, thrombocytopenia, depression, anxiety and hypertension. Norco provided a 50 percent decrease of the pain with 50 percent improvement of the injured worker's activities of daily living such as self-care and dressing. Her Oswestry Disability Index score was 18 (36% disability) with the use of Norco and 28 (56% disability) without the use of Norco. She had an up to date pain contract and the previous urine drug screen was consistent. She showed no aberrant behavior with this mediation and no signs of misuse or abuse. With the use of Ambien, the injured worker was able to initiate sleep lasting 4-6 hours and with medication she slept for on 30-45 minutes at a time. Prescriptions were given for Norco and Ambien. Currently under review is the request for 1 prescription of Norco and 1 prescription of Ambien. Documents submitted for review shows the utilization of Norco and Ambien dating back to 2013.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 prescription of Norco 10/325mg #120 with 3 refills: Overturned

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines opioids Page(s): 76-84.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on opioids states for ongoing management: On-Going Management. Actions Should Include: (a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed, and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. (b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. (c) Office: 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. These domains have been summarized as the "4 A's" (analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and aberrant drug taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs. (Passik, 2000) (d) Home: To aid in pain and functioning assessment, the patient should be requested to keep a pain diary that includes entries such as pain triggers, and incidence of end-of-dose pain. It should be emphasized that using this diary will help in tailoring the opioid dose. This should not be a requirement for pain management. (e) Use of drug screening or inpatient treatment with issues of abuse, addiction, or poor pain control. (f) Documentation of misuse of medications (doctor-shopping, uncontrolled drug escalation, drug diversion). (g) Continuing review of overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control. (h) Consideration of a consultation with a multidisciplinary pain clinic if doses of opioids are required beyond what is usually required for the condition or pain does not improve on opioids in 3 months. Consider a psych consult if there is evidence of depression, anxiety or irritability. Consider an addiction medicine consult if there is evidence of substance misuse. When to Continue Opioids (a) If the patient has returned to work. (b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain. (Washington, 2002) (Colorado, 2002) (Ontario, 2000) (VA/DoD, 2003) (Maddox-AAPM/APS, 1997) (Wisconsin, 2004) (Warfield, 2004) The long-term use of this medication class is not recommended per the California MTUS unless there documented evidence of benefit with measurable outcome measures and improvement in function. These criteria have been met and the request is medically necessary.

1 prescription of Ambien 10mg #30 with 2 refills: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Mental Illness & Stress, Zolpidem (Ambien) (2015).

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG, ambien.

Decision rationale: Zolpidem is a prescription short-acting non-benzodiazepine hypnotic approved for the short-term treatment of insomnia. Proper sleep hygiene is critical to the individual with chronic pain. While sleeping pills, so-called minor tranquilizers and anti-anxiety medications are commonly prescribed in chronic pain, pain specialists rarely, if ever, recommend them for long-term use. There is also concern that they may increase pain and depression over the long-term. The medication is not intended for use greater than 6 weeks. There is no notation or rationale given for longer use in the provided progress reports. There is no documentation of other preferred long-term insomnia intervention choices being tried and failed. For these reasons the request is not medically necessary.