

Case Number:	CM15-0015558		
Date Assigned:	02/03/2015	Date of Injury:	10/13/2004
Decision Date:	03/25/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/13/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/27/2015

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: New Jersey, Michigan, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular Medicine

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 59 year old male who sustained a work related injury October 13, 2004. While installing a floor rise panel, one of the panels began to fall and he attempted to push it back injuring his back. Over the course of care, he had been treated with medications both narcotic and NSAID's (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), acupuncture, physical therapy and injections. According to a primary treating physician's progress report dated December 29, 2014, the injured worker presented with low back pain 8/10. Physical examination reveals tenderness in the right and left lumbar paravertebral regions at the L4-L5 and L5-S1 levels. There is pain with extension and lateral rotation. Diagnosis is documented as lumbosacral spondylosis. Treatment plan included requests for authorization of a bilateral medial branch block on the left side at L4-L5 and L5-S1 levels and Methadone, and discussion on the use of opioids. According to utilization review dated January 13, 2015, the request for Methadone 10mg #84 is non-certified, citing MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Methadone 10 mg #84: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for use of opioids Methadone Page(s): 76-79, 61.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Methadone: Recommended as a second-line drug for moderate to severe pain if the potential benefit outweighs the risk. The FDA reports that they have received reports of severe morbidity and mortality with this medication. This appears, in part, secondary to the long half-life of the drug (8-59 hours). Pain relief on the other hand only lasts from 4-8 hours. Methadone should only be prescribed by providers experienced in using it. In addition and according to MTUS guidelines, ongoing use of opioids should follow specific rules: "(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." According to the patient file, there is no objective documentation of pain and functional improvement to justify continuous use of high narcotics dose in this patient. Therefore, the prescription of Methadone 10 mg #84 is not medically necessary.