

Case Number:	CM15-0015792		
Date Assigned:	02/03/2015	Date of Injury:	02/15/2012
Decision Date:	03/20/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/16/2015
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: 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 60-year-old female, with a reported date of injury of 02/15/2012. The diagnoses include lumbar disc displacement without myelopathy, cervical disc displacement, thoracic sprain/strain, and lumbosacral spondylosis. Treatments have included physical therapy, an MRI of the lumbar spine on 12/06/2012, oral medications, lumbar epidural steroid injections, and electromyography of the bilateral lower extremity on 09/20/2013. The visit note dated 01/05/2015 indicates that the injured worker presented with chronic neck pain, back pain, and left shoulder pain. She stated that she did not receive much benefit from physical therapy. The injured worker mentioned that the medications continue to help to reduce pain and better function. She was tolerating the medications well without side effects. The treating physician requested buprenorphine 0.25mg #60. The rationale for the request was not indicated. On 01/16/2015, Utilization Review (UR) denied the request for Buprenorphine 0.25mg #60, noting that there must be a plan of how long this pain regimen is to be provided, and there must be functionality provided of the improvements while taking the medications. The MTUS Chronic Pain Guidelines were cited.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Buprenorphine 0.25mg 1 tab under the tongue 2x/day #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

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 nonopioid 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. There is no reported improvement in pain measures such as VAS scores. There is also no objective measure of improvement in function. For these reasons the criteria set forth above of ongoing and continued use of opioids have not been met. Therefore the request is not certified.