

Case Number:	CM15-0111126		
Date Assigned:	06/18/2015	Date of Injury:	03/29/2011
Decision Date:	07/16/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/09/2015

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, Alabama, 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 48 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 8/29/2011. He reported injury to his neck and back from cleaning windows on a scaffold. The injured worker was diagnosed as having sciatica, cervical post-laminectomy syndrome, disorders of sacrum, and lumbar spinal stenosis. Treatment to date has included diagnostics, acupuncture, epidural steroid injections, physical therapy, and medications. Cervical spinal surgery was noted in 4/2011, noting prior spinal history with recovery. Currently (5/08/2015), the injured worker complains of low back pain secondary to spinal stenosis, axial lower back pain. He was authorized for lumbar spinal surgery but did not have an appointment yet. Medications included Tramadol ER, Diclofenac cream, and Trazadone. With medication use, he reported a 20% pain decrease and increased activity tolerance. He denied side effects. A review of symptoms noted depression. Physical exam noted normal muscle tone, without atrophy, in all extremities. His work status was permanent and stationary. The treatment plan included continued medications, including Diclofenac and Tramadol. The use of these medications was noted since at least 12/2014. It was noted that Topamax and Orphenadrine were discontinued on 4/10/2015, due to the lack of neuropathic complaints and/or muscle spasm. Urine toxicology was not noted.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Diclofenac sodium 1.5% (DOS 05/08/15): 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 Topical Analgesics ,NONSELECTIVE NSAIDS Page(s): 111, 107.

Decision rationale: Voltaren Gel (Diclofenac) is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). According to MTUS, in Chronic Pain Medical Treatment guidelines section Topical Analgesics (page 111), topical analgesics are largely experimental in use with few randomized controlled trials to determine efficacy or safety. Many agents are combined to other pain medications for pain control. There is limited research to support the use of many of these agents. Furthermore, according to MTUS guidelines, any compounded product that contains at least one drug or drug class that is not recommended is not recommended. Diclofenac is used for osteoarthritis pain of wrist, ankle and elbow and there is no strong evidence for its use for spine pain such as cervical and lumbar spine. Therefore, the request for Diclofenac sodium 1.5% is not medically necessary.

Tramadol HCL ER 150mg (DOS 05/08/15): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Functional Improvement, Short-acting/long-acting opioids, Criteria for use of opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Tramadol Page(s): 113.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Ultram (Tramadol) is a synthetic opioid indicated for the pain management but not recommended as a first line oral analgesic. 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. 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." In this case, there is no clear evidence of recent functional and pain improvement from the previous use of Tramadol. There is no objective documentation of pain severity level to justify the use of tramadol in this patient. There is no clear documentation of the efficacy/safety of previous use of tramadol. There is no recent evidence of objective monitoring of compliance of the patient with his medications. Therefore, the prescription of TRAMADOL HCL ER 150 mg is not medically necessary.

