

Case Number:	CM15-0113431		
Date Assigned:	06/19/2015	Date of Injury:	07/26/2012
Decision Date:	08/04/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/29/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/12/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 41 year old female patient who sustained an industrial injury on 07/26/2012. The patient described having been lifting heavy boxes at work and bending over and moving the boxes onto pallets and resulted in injury. A recent primary treating office visit dated 04/02/2015 reported the patient having undergone electrodiagnsotic nerve conduction study in March 2015 which revealed positive for evidence of left distal peroneal neuropathy; left chronic L5 radiculopathy. She reports the lumbar epidural steroid injection had "helped a lot." The following diagnoses were applied: moderate lumbar L4-5 foraminal stenosis with herniated nucleus pulposus and left lower extremity radiculitis. Current medications are: Tramadol 50mg, and Lidoderm patches. She is prescribed returning to a modified work duty on 04/02/2015. Back on 11/20/2014 at a primary treating follow up chief complaint noted low back pain. She is currently taking Naproxen for the pain. She has been off from work 08/20/2012-10/08/2012. The treating diagnosis was moderate left L4-5 foraminal stenosis with HNP and left lower extremity radiculitis. The plan of care noted recommending acupuncture session, continue with medication to include: Ultracet, Omeprazole, and Lidoderm patches. She is to remain on a modified work duty.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Tramadol 50 mg #120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 76-78.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page(s) 74-96.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines cite opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury of 2012 without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The Tramadol 50 mg #120 is not medically necessary and appropriate.