

Case Number:	CM15-0114571		
Date Assigned:	06/22/2015	Date of Injury:	07/15/2009
Decision Date:	07/21/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/01/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/15/2015

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: Massachusetts

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Pain Management

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 female, who sustained an industrial injury on 7/15/2009. Diagnoses include neck pain and low back pain. Treatment to date has included medications including Tramadol, Sombra cream and Motrin and a TENS unit. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the lumbar spine dated 2/23/2012 was read by the evaluating provider as showing disc desiccation at L3-4, L4-5 and L5-S1. There is an annular tear at L4-5 and L5-S1. Posterior bulging disc is noted at these levels but no evidence of disc herniation or stenosis. Per the Primary Treating Physician's Progress Report dated 4/20/2015 the injured worker reported ongoing neck, back and shoulder pain. Physical examination revealed no changes. The plan of care included medications and authorization was requested for Sombra cream.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Sombra cream 32 oz with 3 refills: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines (1) Medications for chronic pain, p60 (2) Topical Analgesics, p111-113.

Decision rationale: The claimant has a remote history of a work injury occurring in July 2009 and continues to be treated for neck, shoulder, and low back pain. When seen, tramadol, Motrin, and Sombra cream were being prescribed. She was using TENS and able to decrease her medication use. Sombra cream contains camphor, menthol, capsaicin, witch hazel, and plant extracts. Camphor is a naturally occurring compound that is used as an active ingredient in topical analgesics. Menthol is used as a topical analgesic in over the counter medications such as Ben-Gay or Icy Hot. It works by first cooling the skin then warming it up, providing a topical anesthetic and analgesic effect which may be due to interference with transmission of pain signals through nerves. Guidelines address the use of capsaicin which is believed to work through a similar mechanism and is recommended as an option in patients who have not responded or are intolerant to other treatments. Many agents are compounded as monotherapy or in combination for pain control such as opioids antidepressants, glutamate receptor antagonists, alpha-adrenergic receptor agonists, adenosine, cannabinoids, cholinergic receptor agonists, GABA agonists, prostanoids, bradykinin, adenosine triphosphate, biogenic amines, and nerve growth factor. There is little to no research to support the use of many these agents including all of the plant extracts in Sombra. Any compounded product that contains at least one drug (or drug class) that is not recommended is not recommended. Guidelines also recommend that when prescribing medications only one medication should be given at a time. By prescribing a multiple combination medication, in addition to the increased risk of adverse side effects, it would not be possible to determine whether any derived benefit is due to a particular component. This medication is not medically necessary.