

Case Number:	CM15-0119388		
Date Assigned:	07/02/2015	Date of Injury:	06/12/2001
Decision Date:	08/04/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/28/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/19/2015

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: Texas, New York, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational 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 applicant is a represented 57-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain (LBP) reportedly associated with an industrial injury of June 12, 2001. In a Utilization Review report dated May 28, 2015, the claims administrator partially approved a request for morphine sulfate while approving a request for Kadian extended release. The claims administrator referenced an RFA form received on May 19, 2015 and an associated progress note of the same date in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On May 19, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back pain status post earlier failed spine surgery in February 2012. The applicant reported 8/10 pain complaints with medications but stated that his pain complaints without medications would be the "worse pain ever". Activities of daily living as basic as sitting and walking remained problematic, it was reported. Both Kadian and morphine sulfate were renewed. The applicant's work status was not explicitly detailed, although the applicant did not appear to be working. The attending provider alluded to drug tests of November 5, 2014 and January 20, 2015 to the effect that the applicant had tested positive for both marijuana and benzodiazepines in the past. The applicant had superimposed issues with depression, it was suggested in at least one section of the note.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 prescription of Morphine Sulfate 30mg #150: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 6) When to Discontinue Opioids; 7) When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 79; 80.

Decision rationale: No, the request for morphine sulfate, an opioid agent, is not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. As noted on page 79 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, immediate discontinuation of opioids is suggested in individuals who are concurrently using illicit substances. Here, the applicant was concurrently using marijuana, an illicit substance, it was reported on May 19, 2015. Discontinuing opioid therapy with morphine, thus, was a more appropriate option than continuing the same here. The applicant, furthermore, failed to meet criteria set forth on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines for continuation of opioid therapy. Specifically, the applicant's work status was not clearly outlined on May 19, 2015, suggesting that the applicant was not working. The attending provider's reports to the effect that the applicant reported 8/10 pain with medications and continued to report that activities of daily living as basic as standing and walking remained problematic, coupled with the attending provider's failure to report the applicant's work status, likewise, did not make a compelling case for continuation of opioid therapy with morphine sulfate. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.