

Case Number:	CM15-0147327		
Date Assigned:	08/10/2015	Date of Injury:	04/28/2011
Decision Date:	10/05/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/21/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/29/2015

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: Emergency 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 55 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 4-28-11 when he felt a pop in his left knee while stocking shelves (per Utilization Review). He currently complains of left knee pain with a pain level of 9 out of 10; left shoulder pain (9 out of 10); upper thoracic pain (7 out of 10); low back pain (8 out of 10). On physical exam of the left knee there was tenderness diffusely, swelling; there was tenderness and spasms of the lumbar spine and limited range of motion due to pain; diffuse tenderness of the left elbow; tenderness of the left shoulder, positive impingement signs, limited range of motion with pain, atrophy of the left deltoid musculature. Medications were MS Contin, Norco, Topamax, amitriptyline, phentermine, Nexium, naproxen, Lidoderm patch, panproprazole, clonazepam, Flector Patch, Neurontin. Without medications there is a decline in the injured workers condition. Diagnoses include left total knee arthroplasty (8-11-14); bilateral wrist, hand pain; low back pain; left elbow pain; impingement, osteoarthropathy, rotator cuff pathology, left shoulder. Treatments to date include medications; right wrist brace; LSO brace. In the progress note dated 7-13-15 the treating provider's plan of care includes requests for Norco, Topamax, amitriptyline, phentermine, Nexium, naproxen, pantoprazole, clonazepam, Fioricet.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg quantity 120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 80.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 78.

Decision rationale: The request is for the use of a medication in the opioid class. The MTUS guidelines state that for ongoing treatment with a pharmaceutical in this class, certain requirements are necessary. This includes not only adequate pain control, but also functional improvement. Four domains have been proposed for management of patients on opioids. This includes pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant drug-related behaviors. In this case, there is inadequate documentation of persistent functional improvement which should eventually lead to medication discontinuation. As such, the request is not certified. All opioid medications should be titrated down slowly in order to prevent a significant withdrawal syndrome and therefore is not medically necessary.

Topamax 50mg quantity 60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Anti Epilepsy Drugs Page(s): 16.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Anti-epilepsy drugs (AEDs) for pain.

Decision rationale: The request is for the medication Topamax. This drug is categorized as an anti-epileptic which is usually used for neuropathic pain. The guideline specifically states the following regarding Topamax: Topiramate (Topamax, generic available) has been shown to have variable efficacy, with failure to demonstrate efficacy in neuropathic pain of 'central' etiology. It is still considered for use for neuropathic pain when other anticonvulsants fail. Topiramate has recently been investigated as an adjunct treatment for obesity, but the side effect profile limits its use in this regard. (Rosenstock, 2007) In this case, the use of this medication is not advised. This is secondary to poor demonstration of pain defined as neuropathic after a trial of first-line anticonvulsant medication. As such, the request is not medically necessary.

Fioricet 50/300/40mg quantity 90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Barbiturate Containing Analgesic Agents Page(s): 22.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 78.

Decision rationale: The request is for the use of a medication in the opioid class. The MTUS guidelines state that for ongoing treatment with a pharmaceutical in this class, certain requirements are necessary. This includes not only adequate pain control, but also functional improvement. Four domains have been proposed for management of patients on opioids. This includes pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant drug-related behaviors. In this case, there is inadequate documentation of persistent functional improvement which should eventually lead to medication discontinuation. As such, the request is not certified. All opioid medications should be titrated down slowly in order to prevent a significant withdrawal syndrome and therefore is not medically necessary.

Nexium 40mg quantity 30 with five refills: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Proton Pump Inhibitor.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Proton Pump Inhibitor, NSAID Page(s): 68.

Decision rationale: The request is for the use of a medication in the class of a proton pump inhibitor. It is indicated for patients with peptic ulcer disease. It can also be used as a preventative measure in patients taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatories for chronic pain. Unfortunately, they do have certain side effects including gastrointestinal disease. The MTUS guidelines states that patients who are classified as intermediate or high risk, should be treated prophylactically. Criteria for risk are as follows: "(1) age > 65 years; (2) history of peptic ulcer, GI bleeding or perforation; (3) concurrent use of ASA, corticosteroids, and/or an anticoagulant; or (4) high dose/multiple NSAID (e.g., NSAID + low-dose ASA)". Due to the fact the patient does not meet to above stated criteria, the request for use is not medically necessary.

Naproxen 500mg quantity 360 with five refills: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Non Steroidal Anti Inflammatory Drugs.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain (Chronic) NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs).

Decision rationale: The request is for the use of a medication in the NSAID class. The ODG state the following regarding this topic: Specific recommendations - Osteoarthritis (including knee and hip): Recommended at the lowest dose for the shortest period in patients with moderate to severe pain. Acetaminophen may be considered for initial therapy for patients with mild to moderate pain, and in particular, for those with gastrointestinal, cardiovascular or renovascular risk factors. NSAIDs appear to be superior to acetaminophen, particularly for patients with moderate to severe pain. There is no evidence to recommend one drug in this class over another based on efficacy. In particular, there appears to be no difference between traditional NSAIDs

and COX-2 NSAIDs in terms of pain relief. The main concern of selection is based on adverse effects. COX-2 NSAIDs have fewer GI side effects at the risk of increased cardiovascular side effects, although the FDA has concluded that long-term clinical trials are best interpreted to suggest that cardiovascular risk occurs with all NSAIDs and is a class effect (with naproxyn being the safest drug). There is no evidence of long-term effectiveness for pain or function. (Chen, 2008) (Laine, 2008) Back Pain: Acute low back pain & acute exacerbations of chronic pain: Recommended as a second-line treatment after acetaminophen. In general, there is conflicting to negative evidence that NSAIDs are more effective than acetaminophen for acute LBP. (Van Tulder, 2006) (Hancock, 2007) For patients with acute low back pain with sciatica a recent Cochrane review (including three heterogeneous randomized controlled trials) found no differences in treatment with NSAIDs vs. placebo. In patients with axial low back pain this same review found that NSAIDs were not more effective than acetaminophen for acute low-back pain, and that acetaminophen had fewer side effects. (Roelofs-Cochrane, 2008) The addition of NSAIDs or spinal manipulative therapy does not appear to increase recovery in patients with acute low back pain over that received with acetaminophen treatment and advice from their physician. (Hancock, 2007) Back Pain: Chronic low back pain: Recommended as an option for short-term symptomatic relief. A Cochrane review of the literature on drug relief for low back pain (LBP) suggested that NSAIDs were no more effective than other drugs such as acetaminophen, narcotic analgesics, and muscle relaxants. The review also found that NSAIDs had more adverse effects than placebo and acetaminophen but fewer effects than muscle relaxants and narcotic analgesics. In addition, evidence from the review suggested that no one NSAID, including COX-2 inhibitors, was clearly more effective than another. (Roelofs-Cochrane, 2008) See also Anti-inflammatory medications. Neuropathic pain: There is inconsistent evidence for the use of these medications to treat long-term neuropathic pain, but they may be useful to treat breakthrough pain and mixed pain conditions such as osteoarthritis (and other nociceptive pain) in patients with neuropathic pain. (Namaka, 2004) (Gore, 2006) See NSAIDs, GI symptoms & cardiovascular risk; NSAIDs, hypertension and renal function; & Medications for acute pain (analgesics). Besides the above well-documented side effects of NSAIDs, there are other less well-known effects of NSAIDs, and the use of NSAIDs has been shown to possibly delay and hamper healing in all the soft tissues, including muscles, ligaments, tendons, and cartilage. (Maroon, 2006) The risks of NSAIDs in older patients, which include increased cardiovascular risk and gastrointestinal toxicity, may outweigh the benefits of these medications. (AGS, 2009) As stated above, acetaminophen would be considered first-line treatment for chronic pain. In this case, the use of an NSAID is not advised. This is secondary to the duration of use and significant side effect profile. Also, the use of NSAIDs is known to delay the healing of soft tissue including ligaments, tendons, and cartilage. As such, the request is not medically necessary.

Clonazepam 1mg quantity 60: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Benzodiazepines Page(s): 24.

Decision rationale: The request is for the use of a medication in the category of benzodiazepines. It is usually indicated to treat anxiety disorders but has been used short-term as a muscle relaxant. The MTUS guidelines state the following: Not recommended for long-term use because long-term efficacy is unproven and there is a risk of dependence. Most guidelines limit use to 4 weeks. Their range of action includes benzodiazepines are the treatment of choice in very few conditions. Tolerance to hypnotic effects develops rapidly. Tolerance to anxiolytic effects occurs within months and long-term use may actually increase anxiety. A more appropriate treatment for anxiety disorder is an antidepressant. Tolerance to anticonvulsant and muscle relaxant effects occurs within weeks. (Baillargeon, 2003) (Ashton, 2005) In this case, a medication in this class would not be advised for continued use due to the duration of therapy. As such, the request is not certified. All benzodiazepine medications should be titrated down slowly to prevent an acute withdrawal syndrome and therefore is not medically necessary.

Pantoprazole 20mg quantity 60 with five refills: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Proton Pump Inhibitors.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines proton pump inhibitor, NSAID, gastrointestinal disease Page(s): 68.

Decision rationale: The request is for the use of a medication in the class of a proton pump inhibitor. It is indicated for patients with peptic ulcer disease. It can also be used as a preventative measure in patients taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatories for chronic pain. Unfortunately, they do have certain side effects including gastrointestinal disease. The MTUS guidelines states that patients who are classified as intermediate or high risk, should be treated prophylactically. Criteria for risk are as follows: "(1) age > 65 years; (2) history of peptic ulcer, GI bleeding or perforation; (3) concurrent use of ASA, corticosteroids, and/or an anticoagulant; or (4) high dose/multiple NSAID (e.g., NSAID + low-dose ASA)". Due to the fact the patient does not meet to above stated criteria, the request for use is not medically necessary.