

Case Number:	CM15-0173629		
Date Assigned:	09/15/2015	Date of Injury:	02/12/1999
Decision Date:	11/03/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/03/2015

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: Arizona, Michigan

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 injured worker is a 46 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 02-12-1999. Current diagnoses include disorders of bursae and tendons in shoulder region, lesion of ulnar nerve, injury to brachial plexus, myalgia and myositis, and sprain of neck. Report dated 07-16-2015 noted that the injured worker presented with complaints that included chronic cervical spine, left shoulder, left upper extremity, upper and lower back pain. Pain level reduces by 50% with use of pain medications. Physical examination performed on 07-16-2015 revealed tenderness of the paracervical muscles and trapezius, cervical facet tenderness bilaterally, decreased cervical range of motion with pain, and decreased neck strength and sensation. Previous diagnostic studies included urine drug screenings. Previous treatments included medications, surgical interventions, spinal cord stimulator, and a nerve block. The treatment plan included refilling medications which included Norco, Prilosec, gabapentin, Soma, and alprazolam, request for random urine drug screen, request for follow up visit as scheduled, request for medical record reports and diagnostics, and re-evaluation with [REDACTED] every 90 days. The injured worker has been prescribed Norco, Soma and Alprazolam since at least 04-02-2015. Request for authorization dated 07-28-2015, included requests for Norco, Prilosec, gabapentin, Soma, and alprazolam, request for random urine drug screen, request for follow up visit as scheduled, request for medical record reports and diagnostic, and re-evaluation with [REDACTED] every 90 days. The utilization review dated 08-03-2015, non-certified the request for Norco, Soma, alprazolam, and re-evaluation with [REDACTED] every 90 days.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #90: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids, criteria for use.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS, opioids should be discontinued if there is no overall improvement in function, unless there are extenuating circumstances, Opioids should be continued if the patient has returned to work or has improved functioning and pain. Ongoing management actions should include prescriptions from a single practitioner, taken as directed and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. Documentation should follow the 4 A's of analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and aberrant drug taking behaviors. Long term users of opioids should be regularly reassessed. In the maintenance phase the dose should not be lowered if it is working. Also, patients who receive opioid therapy may sometimes develop unexpected changes in their response to opioids, which includes development of abnormal pain, change in pain pattern, persistence of pain at higher levels than expected. When this happens opioids can actually increase rather than decrease sensitivity to noxious stimuli. It is important to note that a decrease in opioid efficacy should not always be treated by increasing the dose or adding other opioids, but may actually require weaning. A review of the injured workers medical records reveal documentation of up to 50% improvement in pain and function with the use her medications including ADL's, mobility and restorative sleep, continued use appears appropriate, therefore the request for Norco 10/325mg #90 is medically necessary.

Soma 350mg #60: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Carisoprodol (Soma).

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS, recommend non-sedating muscle relaxants with caution as a second-line option for short-term treatment of acute exacerbations in patients with chronic LBP. Muscle relaxants may be effective in reducing pain and muscle tension, and increasing mobility. However, in most LBP cases, they show no benefit beyond NSAIDs in pain and overall improvement. Also there is no additional benefit shown in combination with NSAIDs. Efficacy appears to diminish over time, and prolonged use of some medications in this class may lead to dependence. Sedation is the most commonly reported adverse effect of muscle relaxant medications. Carisoprodol is not recommended for longer than a 2 to 3 week period. Carisoprodol is metabolized to meprobamate an anxiolytic that is a schedule IV controlled substance. Carisoprodol is classified as a schedule IV drug in several states but not on a federal level. It is suggested that its main effect is due to generalized sedation as well as treatment of anxiety. A review of the injured workers medical records reveal documentation of up to 50%

improvement in pain and function with the use her medications including ADL's, mobility and restorative sleep, continued use appears appropriate, therefore the request for Soma 350 #60 is medically necessary.

Alprazolam 0.5mg #45: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Benzodiazepines.

Decision rationale: The MTUS does not recommend long term use of benzodiazepines, long term efficacy is unproven and there is a risk of dependence. Most guidelines limit use to 4 weeks. Tolerance to all of its effects develop within weeks to months, and long term use may actually increase anxiety, a more appropriate treatment for anxiety disorder is an antidepressant. Chronic benzodiazepines are the treatment of choice in very few conditions. However a review of the injured workers medical records reveal documentation of up to 50% improvement in pain and function with the use her medications including ADL's, mobility and restorative sleep, continued use appears appropriate, therefore the request for Alprazolam 0.5mg # 45 is medically necessary.

Re-evaluation with [REDACTED] every 90 days: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004, Section(s): Follow-up Visits. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic) / office visits.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS/ ACOEM Patients whose low back may be work related should receive follow-up care every three to five days by a midlevel practitioner, who can counsel them about avoiding static positions, medication use, activity modification, and other concerns. Take care to answer questions and make these sessions interactive so that patients are fully involved in their recovery. If the patient has returned to work, these interactions may be done on site or by telephone to avoid interfering with modified- or full-work activities. Physician follow-up generally occurs when a release to modified, increased, or full duty is needed, or after appreciable healing or recovery can be expected, on average. Physician follow-up might be expected every four to seven days if the patient is off work and every seven to fourteen days if the patient is working. Per the ODG, office visits are "recommended as determined to be medically necessary. Evaluation and management (E&M) outpatient visits to the offices of medical doctor(s) play a critical role in the proper diagnosis and return to function of an injured worker, and they should be encouraged. The need for a clinical office visit with a health care provider is individualized based upon a review of the patient concerns, signs and symptoms, clinical stability, and reasonable physician judgment. The determination is also based on what medications the patient is taking, since some medicines such as opiates, or medicines such as certain antibiotics, require close monitoring. As patient conditions are extremely varied, a set number of office visits per condition cannot be reasonably established. The determination of necessity for an office visit requires individualized case review and assessment, being ever mindful that the best patient outcomes are achieved with eventual patient

independence from the health care system through self care as soon as clinically feasible." A review of the injured workers medical records reveal that she is being followed by pain management for chronic pain and is being managed with opioids, muscle relaxants and benzodiazepines, these are all medications that require monitoring, therefore, re-evaluation with [REDACTED] every 90 days is appropriate and is medically necessary.