

Case Number:	CM15-0061491		
Date Assigned:	04/07/2015	Date of Injury:	01/01/1997
Decision Date:	05/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/24/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/01/2015

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: Pennsylvania

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Hospice & Palliative 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 61 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 1/1/1997. The current diagnoses are cervical radiculitis, lumbar radiculitis, status post right foot reconstructive surgery with residuals, and chronic pain. According to the progress report dated 2/27/2015, the injured worker complains of neck pain with radiation down her bilateral upper extremities, low back pain with radiation down the bilateral lower extremities, and left shoulder pain. The pain is rated 4-6/10 with medications and 9.5/10 without. Treatment to date has included medication management, MRI studies, and injection. The plan of care includes Hydrocodone/APAP, Tizanidine, Nucynta, and Ketoprofen.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

120 Hydrocodone/APAP 10/325mg: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, Weaning of Medications Page(s): 74-95, 124.

Decision rationale: Norco (hydrocodone with acetaminophen) is a combination medication in the opioid and pain reliever classes. The MTUS Guidelines stress the lowest possible dose of opioid medications should be prescribed to improve pain and function, and monitoring of outcomes over time should affect treatment decisions. The Guidelines recommend that the total opioid daily dose should be lower than 120mg oral morphine equivalents. Documentation of pain assessments should include the current pain intensity, the lowest intensity of pain since the last assessment, the average pain intensity, pain intensity after taking the opioid medication, the amount of time it takes to achieve pain relief after taking the opioid medication, and the length of time the pain relief lasts. Acceptable results include improved function, decreased pain, and/or improved quality of life. The MTUS Guidelines recommend opioids be continued when the worker has returned to work and if the worker has improved function and pain control. When these criteria are not met, a slow individualized taper of medication is recommended to avoid withdrawal symptoms. The submitted documentation indicated the worker was experiencing depressed mood and pain in the lower back that went into the legs, neck that went into the arms, left shoulder, right wrist, and right foot. The recorded pain assessments were minimal and contained few of the elements suggested by the Guidelines. There was no discussion detailing how this medication improved the worker's function, describing how often the medication was needed and used by the worker, exploring the potential negative side effects, or providing an individualized risk assessment. In the absence of such evidence, the current request for 120 tablets of Norco (hydrocodone with acetaminophen) 10/325mg is not medically necessary. Because the potentially serious risks outweigh the benefits in this situation based on the submitted documentation, an individualized taper should be able to be completed with the medication the worker has available.

90 Tizanidine 4mg: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle Relaxants, Weaning of Medications Page(s): 63-66, 124.

Decision rationale: Tizanidine is a medication in the antispasmodic class of muscle relaxants. The MTUS Guidelines support the use of muscle relaxants with caution as a second-line option for short-term use in the treatment of a recent flare-up of long-standing lower back pain. Some literature suggests these medications may be effective in decreasing pain and muscle tension and in increasing mobility, although efficacy decreases over time. In most situations, however, using these medications does not add additional benefit over the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), nor do they add additional benefit in combination with NSAIDs. Negative side effects, such as sedation, can interfere with the worker's function, and prolonged use can lead to dependence. The submitted and reviewed documentation indicated the worker was experiencing depressed mood and pain in the lower back that went into the legs, neck that went into the arms, left shoulder, right wrist, and right foot. There was no report of a new flare of on-going lower back pain or a discussion detailing special circumstances that sufficiently supported the continued use of this medication long-term. Further, these records demonstrated this medication

was being used for at least several months. In the absence of such evidence, the current request for ninety tablets of tizanidine 4mg is not medically necessary. Because the potentially serious risks outweigh the benefits in this situation based on the submitted documentation, an individualized taper should be able to be completed with the medication the worker has available.