

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0070863		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/27/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	06/25/2008
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/22/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	04/09/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	04/14/2015

### 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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

### 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 41-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on June 25, 2008. The injured worker's initial complaints and diagnoses are not included in the provided documentation. The injured worker was diagnosed as having residual scarring versus chronic nerve damage at left cervical 6, status post anterior cervical discectomy and fusion at cervical 5-cervical 6 and foraminotomy at cervical 6-cervical 6 and cervical 6-cervical 7 with residuals of neck and left arm pain, transitional syndrome with stenosis and disc protrusion at cervical 4-cervical 5; acute exacerbation, sprain/strain, and status post multiple surgeries; and anxiety and depression, and weight loss. Diagnostics to date has included urine drug screening, MRI, and electro diagnostic studies. Treatment to date has included a selective nerve root block, psychiatric care, acupuncture, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) unit, and medications including pain, anti-anxiety, antidepressant, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory. On March 24, 2015, the injured worker complains of constant headaches, rated 5-6/10. He complains of constant neck pain radiating to the left upper extremity down the arm and forearm in the cervical 6 dermatome distribution, rated 4-5/10. He reports the left upper extremity radicular pain and paresthesia is worsening. He also complains of constant low back pain rating to the right buttock and thigh down into the right lower extremity. He reports anxiety, depression, stress, and insomnia. The physical exam revealed decreased cervical range of motion. There was left upper extremity weakness and sensory deficit at the cervical 6 left brachioradialis, which is progressively worsening. The treatment plan includes a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory and an opioid medication.

## IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Voltaren XR 100mg #30:** Overturned

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 68.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines NSAID Page(s): 68.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on NSAID therapy states: 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-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 and mixed pain conditions such as osteoarthritis (and other nociceptive pain) in with neuropathic pain. This medication is recommended for the shortest period of time and at the lowest dose possible. The dosing of this medication is within the California MTUS guideline recommendations. The definition of shortest period possible is not clearly defined in the California MTUS. Therefore, the request is certified. Therefore, the requested treatment is medically necessary.

**Norco 10/325mg #15:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 78.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines opioids  
Page(s): 76-84.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on opioids states for ongoing management: On-Going Management. Actions Should Include: (a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed, and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. (b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. (c) Office: Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Information from family members or other caregivers should be considered in determining the patient's response to treatment. The 4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring: Four domains have been proposed as most relevant for ongoing monitoring of chronic pain patients on opioids: pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant (or non-adherent) drug-related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the "4 A's" (analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and aberrant drug taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs. (Passik, 2000)(d) Home: To aid in pain and functioning assessment, the patient should be requested to keep a pain diary that includes entries such as pain triggers, and incidence of end-of-dose pain. It should be emphasized that using this diary will help in tailoring the opioid dose. This should not be a requirement for pain management.(e) Use of drug screening or inpatient treatment with issues of abuse, addiction, or poor pain control.(f) Documentation of misuse of medications (doctor-shopping, uncontrolled drug escalation, drug diversion).(g) Continuing review of overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control.(h) Consideration of a consultation with a multidisciplinary pain clinic if doses of opioids are required beyond what is usually required for the condition or pain does not improve on opioids in 3 months. Consider a psych consult if there is evidence of depression, anxiety or irritability. Consider an addiction medicine consult if there is evidence of substance misuse. When to Continue Opioids(a) If the patient has returned to work(b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain(Washington, 2002) (Colorado, 2002) (Ontario, 2000) (VA/DoD, 2003) (Maddox-AAPM/APS, 1997) (Wisconsin, 2004) (Warfield, 2004). The long-term use of this medication class is not recommended per the California MTUS unless there documented evidence of benefit with measurable outcome measures and improvement in function. There is no documented significant improvement in VAS scores. There are also no objective measurements of improvement in function. Therefore criteria for the ongoing use of opioids have not been met and the request is not certified. Therefore, the requested treatment is not medically necessary.