

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0071067		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/21/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	05/25/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	07/14/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	03/27/2015
<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 50 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 05/25/11. Initial complaints and diagnoses are not addressed. Treatments to date include medications and a lumbar epidural steroid injection. Diagnostic studies include a MRI of the lumbar spine. Current complaints include pain in the lumbar spine radiating to the right buttock. Current diagnoses include myofascial pain syndrome, cervical and lumbar spine sprain, and lumbosacral facet syndrome. In a progress note dated 02/23/15 the treating provider reports the plan of care as continued medication including Neurontin, Tramadol, and Diazepam, and a right L3-4 medial branch block. The requested treatments are tramadol, Neurontin, and Diazepam.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Tramadol:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines opioids Page(s): 93-94, 76-78, 78-80, 124.

**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: 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 nonopioid 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 is not recommended unless certain objective outcome measures have been met as defined above. There is no provided objective outcome measure that shows significant improvement in function while on the medication. There is no evidence of failure of other conservative treatment modalities and other first line choices for chronic pain. There is no documentation of significant improvement in VAS scores while on the medication. For these reasons criteria for ongoing and continued use of the medication have not been met. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.

**Diazepam:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines benzodiazepines Page(s): 24.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines benzodiazepine Page(s): 22.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on benzodiazepines states: Benzodiazepines 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 sedative/hypnotic, anxiolytic, anticonvulsant, and muscle relaxant. Chronic 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) The chronic long-term use of this class of medication is recommended in very few conditions per the California MTUS. There is no evidence however of failure of first line agent for the treatment of anxiety in the provided documentation. For this reason the request is not medically necessary.

**Neurontin 600mg QHS BID:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines anti-epilepsy drugs Page(s): 18-19.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines gabapentin Page(s): 18.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on Neurontin states: Gabapentin (Neurontin, Gabarone, generic available) has been shown to be effective for treatment of diabetic painful neuropathy and postherpetic neuralgia and has been considered as a first-line treatment for neuropathic pain. (Backonja, 2002) (ICSI, 2007) (Knotkova, 2007) (Eisenberg, 2007) (Attal, 2006) This RCT concluded that gabapentin monotherapy appears to be efficacious for the treatment of pain and sleep interference associated with diabetic peripheral neuropathy and exhibits positive effects on mood and quality of life. (Backonja, 1998) It has been given FDA approval for treatment of post-herpetic neuralgia. The number needed to treat (NNT) for overall neuropathic pain is 4. It has a more favorable side-effect profile than Carbamazepine, with a number needed to harm of 2.5. (Wiffen2-Cochrane, 2005) (Zaremba, 2006) Gabapentin in combination with morphine has been studied for treatment of diabetic neuropathy and post herpetic neuralgia. When used in combination the maximum tolerated dosage of both drugs was lower than when each was used as a single agent and better analgesia occurred at lower doses of each. (Gilron-NEJM, 2005) Recommendations involving combination therapy require further study. The requested medication is a first line agent to treatment neuropathic pain. The patient does not have a diagnosis of neuropathic pain. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.