

Case Number:	CM15-0094995		
Date Assigned:	05/21/2015	Date of Injury:	02/15/2010
Decision Date:	06/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/18/2015

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: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 56 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 2/15/2010. He reported developed arm weakness and cumulative injuries to the head, neck, upper back, mid back, lower back, left shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand. He is status post cervical fusion. Diagnoses include post laminectomy syndrome and chronic pain syndrome. Treatments to date include medication therapy, physical therapy, and therapeutic injection. Currently, he complained of head, upper back, left shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand pain with radiation to the left arm. On 4/29/15, the physical examination documented tenderness to bilateral shoulder areas and decreased cervical range of motion. The plan of care included Norco 10/325mg #120, Cymbalta 30mg #60, and physical therapy for the cervical/thoracic spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Aceptaminphen, Opioids, Weaning of Opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page(s) 74-96.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The Norco 10/325mg #120 is not medically necessary and appropriate.

Physical Therapy 1-2 x per week x 6 weeks (cervical & thoracic) Qty: 12: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, pages 98-99.

Decision rationale: Physical therapy is considered medically necessary when the services require the judgment, knowledge, and skills of a qualified physical therapist due to the complexity and sophistication of the therapy and the physical condition of the patient. However, there is no clear measurable evidence of progress with the PT treatment already rendered including milestones of increased ROM, strength, and functional capacity. Review of submitted physician reports show no evidence of functional benefit, unchanged chronic symptom complaints, clinical findings, and functional status. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for visits of physical therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It appears the employee has received significant therapy sessions without demonstrated evidence of functional improvement to allow for additional therapy treatments. There is no report of acute flare-up, new injuries, or change in symptom or clinical findings to support for formal PT in a patient that has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic injury. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support further physical therapy when prior treatment rendered has not resulted in any functional benefit. The Physical Therapy 1-2 x per week x 6 weeks (cervical & thoracic) Qty: 12 is not medically necessary and appropriate.

Cymbalta 30mg #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Duloxetine (Cymbalta). Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Duloxetine (Cymbalta).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Anti-depressants, Page 15.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Treatment Pain Guidelines, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as Cymbalta (Duloxetine, a class of antidepressants that inhibit serotonin reuptake without action on noradrenaline), are controversial based on controlled trials. It has been suggested that the main role of SSRIs may be in addressing psychological symptoms associated with chronic pain; however, more information is needed regarding the role of SSRIs and pain. Duloxetine (Cymbalta) is FDA-approved for anxiety, depression, diabetic neuropathy, and fibromyalgia; Used off-label for neuropathic pain and radiculopathy; and is recommended as a first-line option for diabetic neuropathy; however, no high quality evidence is reported to support the use of duloxetine for lumbar radiculopathy and more studies are needed to determine the efficacy of duloxetine for other types of neuropathic pain. There is no mention of previous failed trial of TCA or other first-line medications and without specific improvement in clinical findings, medical necessity has not been established. The Cymbalta 30mg #60 is not medically necessary and appropriate.