

Case Number:	CM13-0050531		
Date Assigned:	12/27/2013	Date of Injury:	09/28/2010
Decision Date:	03/07/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/23/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/13/2013

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to a physician reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The physician reviewer is Board Certified in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and is licensed to practice in California. 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 physician 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

This 50 year-old male sustained an injury from a fall on 9/28/10 while employed with [REDACTED]. Request under consideration include Norco 10/325 mg. Diagnoses include compression fractures T7-T10; mild anterolisthesis at L4-5; s/p left carpal tunnel release in March 2011. Conservative care has included therapy, injections, and medications. Report of 10/23/13 from [REDACTED] noted low back pain radiating to leg at 10/10 scale without med and 6/10 with medication. Exam noted difficulty eliciting lower extremity reflexes, positive SLR on left, motor strength 5/5. Request included MRI of lumbar spine and Norco. Medication Norco was non-certified on 10/23/13 citing guidelines criteria and lack of medical necessity.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: This 50 year-old male sustained an injury from a fall on 9/28/10 while employed with [REDACTED]. Request under consideration include Norco 10/325 mg.

Diagnoses include compression fractures T7-T10; mild anterolisthesis at L4-5; s/p left carpal tunnel release in March 2011. Conservative care has included therapy, injections, and medications. Report of 10/23/13 from [REDACTED] noted low back pain radiating to leg at 10/10 scale without med and 6/10 with medication. Exam noted difficulty eliciting lower extremity reflexes, positive SLR on left, motor strength 5/5. 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 returned to work 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. Norco 10/325 mg is not medically necessary and appropriate.