

Case Number:	CM14-0120090		
Date Assigned:	09/16/2014	Date of Injury:	07/27/2003
Decision Date:	11/06/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/10/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/30/2014

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Physical Medicine and 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 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/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 patient sustained an injury on 7/27/03 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Norco 10/325 MG #60 and Norflex 100 MG #60. Diagnoses include lumbar sprain/strain/ herniated disc/ facet arthropathy/ L5 radiculopathy; s/p right knee arthroscopy. Conservative care has included medications, therapy, facet blocks at L4-5, L5-S1 bilaterally, and modified activities/rest. Report of 5/16/14 from the provider noted the patient with ongoing chronic pain rated at 8/10 with radiation to lower extremity. Exam showed limited lumbar range; tenderness at spinous processes of L4-5, L5-S1; diffuse muscle spasm at L2-5; positive right Patrick's test; restricted painful knee range with pain at subpatellar area and joint line with positive McMurray's. The request(s) for Norco 10/325 MG #60 was modified to #30 and Norflex 100 MG #60 was non-certified on 7/10/14 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 #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, Criteria for use of Opioids, Therapeutic Trial of Opioids.

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

Decision rationale: This patient sustained an injury on 7/27/03 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Norco 10/325 MG #60 and Norflex 100 MG #60. Diagnoses include lumbar sprain/strain/ herniated disc/ facet arthropathy/ L5 radiculopathy; s/p right knee arthroscopy. Conservative care has included medications, therapy, facet blocks at L4-5, L5-S1 bilaterally, and modified activities/rest. Report of 5/16/14 from the provider noted the patient with ongoing chronic pain rated at 8/10 with radiation to lower extremity. Exam showed limited lumbar range; tenderness at spinous processes of L4-5, L5-S1; diffuse muscle spasm at L2-5; positive right Patrick's test; restricted painful knee range with pain at subpatellar area and joint line with positive McMurray's. The request(s) for Norco 10/325 MG #60 was modified to #30 and Norflex 100 MG #60 was non-certified on 7/10/14. 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 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. The Norco 10/325 MG #60 is not medically necessary and appropriate.

Norflex 100 MG #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle Relaxants (for pain) Page(s): 63-66.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle Relaxants Page(s): 128.

Decision rationale: This patient sustained an injury on 7/27/03 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Norco 10/325 MG #60 and Norflex 100 MG #60. Diagnoses include lumbar sprain/strain/ herniated disc/ facet arthropathy/ L5 radiculopathy; s/p right knee arthroscopy. Conservative care has included medications, therapy, facet blocks at L4-5, L5-S1 bilaterally, and modified activities/rest. Report of 5/16/14 from the provider noted the patient with ongoing chronic pain rated at 8/10 with radiation to lower extremity. Exam showed limited lumbar range; tenderness at spinous processes of L4-5, L5-S1; diffuse muscle spasm at L2-5; positive right Patrick's test; restricted painful knee range with pain at subpatellar area and joint line with positive McMurray's. The request(s) for Norco 10/325 MG #60 was modified to #30 and Norflex 100 MG #60 was non-certified on 7/10/14. Guidelines do not recommend long-term use of this muscle relaxant for this chronic injury of 2003.

Additionally, the efficacy in clinical trials has been inconsistent and most studies are small and of short duration. These medications may be useful for chronic musculoskeletal pain, but there are no long-term studies of their effectiveness or safety. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication or medical need for this treatment and there is no report of significant clinical findings, acute flare-up or new injury to support for its long-term use. There is no report of functional improvement resulting from its previous treatment to support further use as the patient remains functionally unchanged. The Norflex 100 MG #60 is not medically necessary and appropriate.