

Case Number:	CM14-0120446		
Date Assigned:	08/08/2014	Date of Injury:	12/12/2006
Decision Date:	09/18/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/02/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/28/2014

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 47 year-old patient sustained an injury on 12/12/06 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Norco 10/325 mg tablets. Diagnoses included lumbosacral spine herniated disc/ radiculitis/neuritis s/p surgery. Medications list Norco, Anaprox, Morphine, Paxil, Ambien, Prilosec, Ultram, Furbiprofen compound cream. Lumbar spine CT scan dated 5/5/14 showed previous s/p decompression with transpedicular screws and lateral stabilization at L4-S1; no hardware complication; bilateral L5 spondylosis with anterior subluxation at L5-S1; postoperative granulation tissue or persistent disc. Hand-written somewhat illegible reports of 1/24/14 and 5/28/14 noted chronic ongoing symptoms with unchanged clinical findings of tenderness of bilateral SI joints; positive Faber's, decreased range of motion (no degree or planes specified); decreased left S1 dermatome sensation. Treatment included medication regimen for pain control, TENS and supplies; walker with seat. The patient to remain off work. The request(s) for Norco 10/325 mg tablets was non-certified on 7/2/14 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 tablets: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines.

Decision rationale: This 47 year-old patient sustained an injury on 12/12/06 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Norco 10/325 mg tablets. Diagnoses included lumbosacral spine herniated disc/ radiculitis/neuritis s/p surgery. Medications list Norco, Anaprox, Morphine, Paxil, Ambien, Prilosec, Ultram, Furbiprofen compound cream. Lumbar spine CT scan dated 5/5/14 showed previous s/p decompression with transpedicular screws and lateral stabilization at L4-S1; no hardware complication; bilateral L5 spondylosis with anterior subluxation at L5-S1; postoperative granulation tissue or persistent disc. Hand-written somewhat illegible reports of 1/24/14 and 5/28/14 noted chronic ongoing symptoms with unchanged clinical findings of tenderness of bilateral SI joints; positive Faber's, decreased range of motion (no degree or planes specified); decreased left S1 dermatome sensation. Treatment included medication regimen for pain control, TENS and supplies; walker with seat. The patient to remain off work. The request(s) for Norco 10/325 mg tablets was non-certified on 7/2/14. 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 tablets are not medically necessary and appropriate.