

Case Number:	CM14-0137579		
Date Assigned:	09/05/2014	Date of Injury:	04/29/2003
Decision Date:	10/02/2014	UR Denial Date:	08/14/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/26/2014

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 General Preventive Medicine and is licensed to practice in Indiana. 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 employee is a 48 year old female with date of injury of 4/29/2003. A review of the medical records indicates that the patient is undergoing treatment for degenerative joint disease and osteoarthritis of neck and shoulder, tenosynovitis of hand and wrist. Subjective complaints include neck pain and right shoulder pain. Objective findings include decreased range of motion of right shoulder, hand, and elbow. Treatment has included Klonopin, Nortriptyline, Zanaflex, and Norco. The utilization review dated 8/14/2014 partially certified Norco #180 and Skelaxin #90.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #180: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-96. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck and Upper Back (Acute and Chronic), Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Opioids, Pain

Decision rationale: ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for neck and low back pain "except for short use for severe cases, not to exceed 2 weeks." The patient has exceeded the 2 week recommended treatment length for opioid usage. MTUS does not discourage use of opioids past 2 weeks, but does state that "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." The treating physician does not fully document the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, intensity of pain after taking opioid, pain relief, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. As such, the question for Norco 325/10mg # 180 is not medically necessary.

Skelaxin 800mg #90: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Antispasmodics, Page(s): 64-66.

Decision rationale: The above cited guidelines state that for Skelaxin and other drugs in that class, they are "Recommended for a short course of therapy. Limited, mixed-evidence does not allow for a recommendation for chronic use. Cyclobenzaprine is more effective than placebo in the management of back pain, although the effect is modest and comes at the price of adverse effects. This medication is not recommended to be used for longer than 2-3 weeks."The requested Skelaxin 800mg #90 would be more than for the recommended 2-3 weeks, and so it is not medically necessary.