

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0144346		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/12/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	04/20/2005
<b>Decision Date:</b>	11/03/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/21/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	09/05/2014

### 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 4/20/05 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Norco 10/325 mg, 1 tablet by oral every 4 hours as needed # 150, and 3 refills. Diagnoses include bilateral cervical radiculopathy/ foraminal stenosis C3-7 s/p C6 corpectomy C3-4 and C6-7 fusion with C5-T1 instrumentation on 11/2/10; right carpal tunnel syndrome. Conservative care has included medications, therapy, selective nerve blocks with minimal benefit, and modified activities/rest. Report of 8/4/14 from the provider noted the patient with continued chronic lower cervical spine pain radiating to right superior scapular and posterior shoulder rated at 10/10. Exam of the cervical spine showed no tenderness or spasm; intact sensation; range of flex/ext 70/8 degrees with symmetrical 1+ DTRs and intact 5/5 motor strength throughout. Treatment plan included psych Eval prior to SCS trial and continued refills of Norco. The request(s) for Norco 10/325 mg, 1 tablet by oral every 4 hours as needed # 150, 3 refills was non-certified on 8/21/14 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, 1 tablet PO q 4 hours as needed # 150, 3 refills: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for use of Opioids Page(s): 76-78, 91.

**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 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, 1 tablet PO q 4 hours as needed # 150, 3 refills is not medically necessary and appropriate.