

Case Number:	CM14-0032484		
Date Assigned:	06/20/2014	Date of Injury:	11/03/2011
Decision Date:	07/18/2014	UR Denial Date:	02/18/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/14/2014

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 Anesthesiology, has a subspecialty in Pain Management 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:

The claimant is a 55-year-old male with an 11/3/11 date of injury. At the time (2/7/14) of request for authorization for Norco 10/325mg #120, there is documentation of subjective (neck pain and low back pain radiating go the left buttock) and objective (tenderness over the lumbar paraspinals, pain with lumbar flexion and extension, tenderness over the cervical paraspinals and facet joints, and decreased cervical range of motion) findings, current diagnoses (low back pain radiating to left leg, neck pain, cervical spines stenosis, lumbar degenerative disc disease, and chronic pain syndrome), and treatment to date (ongoing therapy with Norco since at least 10/16/13 with decrease in pain levels and increase in activities of daily living). In addition, medical report identifies a signed opioid contract.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #120: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 76 - 79.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-80.

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines necessitate documentation that the prescriptions are from a single practitioner and are taken as directed; the lowest possible dose is being prescribed; and there will be ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects, as criteria necessary to support the medical necessity of opioids. MTUS-Definitions identifies that any treatment intervention should not be continued in the absence of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services. Within the medical information available for review, there is documentation of diagnoses of low back pain radiating to left leg, neck pain, cervical spines stenosis, lumbar degenerative disc disease, and chronic pain syndrome. In addition, given documentation of a signed opioid contract, there is documentation that the prescriptions are from a single practitioner and are taken as directed; the lowest possible dose is being prescribed; and there will be ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Furthermore, given documentation of ongoing treatment with Norco since at least 10/16/13 with decrease in pain levels and increase in activities of daily living, there is documentation of functional benefit or improvement as an increase in activity tolerance as a result of use of Norco. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for Norco 10/325mg #120 is medically necessary.