

Case Number:	CM14-0035157		
Date Assigned:	06/23/2014	Date of Injury:	09/23/2006
Decision Date:	07/18/2014	UR Denial Date:	02/18/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/21/2014

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:

According to the records made available for review, this is a 59-year-old male with a 9/28/06 date of injury. There is documentation of subjective findings of chronic low back pain with a new pain lower down on the right side, rated as a 7 out of 10. Objective findings are tenderness to palpation over the lumbar spine and decrease lumbar range of motion. Current diagnoses status post thoracic and lumbar spinal instrumentation, chronic pain syndrome, thoracic spine strain, lumbar spine strain, and prescription narcotic dependence. Treatment to date includes ongoing therapy with Norco since at least 7/15/08). There is no 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; and functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications as a result of use of Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Prospective request for Norco 10/325 mg. # 90: Upheld

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

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 status post thoracic and lumbar spinal instrumentation, chronic pain syndrome, thoracic spine strain, lumbar spine strain, and prescription narcotic dependence. In addition, there is documentation of moderate to severe chronic low back pain. However, there is no 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. There is no documentation 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 as a result of use of Norco. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for Norco 10/325 mg. # 90 is not medically necessary and appropriate.