

Case Number:	CM14-0041171		
Date Assigned:	06/30/2014	Date of Injury:	10/15/2002
Decision Date:	07/30/2014	UR Denial Date:	04/02/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/08/2014

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 67-year-old male with a 10/15/02 date of injury. At the time (3/11/14) of request for authorization for Norco 10/325 mg #180 with 2 refills and Ambien 12.5 mg #25 x 2 refills, there is documentation of subjective (neck pain radiating to the shoulder and arm with numbness and tingling of the whole hand; difficulty sleeping, and headaches) and objective (tenderness to palpation over the cervical paraspinal musculature and decreased sensation over the right shoulder down to the fingers) findings. The patient's current diagnoses included cervical spine degenerative disk disease with radiculopathy. The treatment to date includes ongoing therapy with Norco with pain relief; and Ambien since at least 10/10/13 with improved sleep. Regarding Norco 10/325 mg #180 with 2 refills, 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. Regarding Ambien 12.5 mg #25 x 2 refills, there is no documentation of short-term (two to six weeks) treatment of insomnia 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 Ambien.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg #180 with 2 refills: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 76-80.

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

Decision rationale: The 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 a diagnosis of cervical spine degenerative disk disease with radiculopathy. 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. In addition, despite documentation of pain relief with use of Norco, 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 #180 with 2 refills is not medically necessary.