

Case Number:	CM14-0044042		
Date Assigned:	06/16/2014	Date of Injury:	03/31/2006
Decision Date:	07/17/2014	UR Denial Date:	03/05/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/07/2014

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 injured worker is a 53-year-old male with a 3/31/06 date of injury and status post T5-6 level reconstruction with anterior and posterior decompression/fusion. At the time of request for authorization for Norco 10/325mg #90, the patient had left side thoracic pain radiating between the shoulders and persistent low back pain rated as an 8 out of 10, left antalgic gait, decreased lumbar range of motion, and decreased cervical range of motion. The diagnoses included thoracic pain status post T5-6 level reconstruction with anterior and posterior decompression/fusion, lower back pain, and chronic left sciatica L5-S1 distribution weakness. The treatment to date included Norco since at least 10/31/13 for intractable spinal pain. 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:

NORCO 10/325MG #90: 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): 74-80.

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 diagnoses of thoracic pain status post T5-6 level reconstruction with anterior and posterior decompression/fusion, lower back pain, and chronic left sciatica L5-S1 distribution weakness. In addition, there is documentation of moderately severe 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; there will be ongoing review, and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. In addition, given documentation of ongoing treatment with Norco since at least 10/31/13, 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 10/325mg #90 is not medically necessary.