

Case Number:	CM14-0176699		
Date Assigned:	10/30/2014	Date of Injury:	04/22/2013
Decision Date:	01/07/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/15/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/24/2014

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 Occupational Medicine 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 applicant is a represented [REDACTED] employee who has filed a claim for chronic neck, mid back, and low back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of April 22, 2013. In a Utilization Review Report dated October 15, 2014, the claims administrator partially approved a request for Norco, apparently for weaning purposes. The claims administrator stated that its decision was based on an October 17, 2014 Request for Authorization (RFA) form. In a progress note dated November 4, 2014, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back pain radiating into left lower extremity, 8/10. The applicant stated that his medications were helping in one section of the note while other section of the note stated that the applicant's quality of sleep was poor and that his pain levels were unchanged since the preceding visit. Paresthesias about the upper and lower extremities were reported. The applicant was placed off of work, on total temporary disability, until the next visit. In an October 6, 2014 progress note, the applicant again reported 8/10 multifocal neck, low back, left lower extremity and right upper extremity pain. The applicant stated that his pain medications would drop to 5/10 with medications. The applicant stated that his quality of sleep was poor. Vicodin/Norco, Cyclobenzaprine, cognitive behavioral therapy, and a functional restoration program were sought while the applicant was placed off of work, on total temporary disability. In an applicant questionnaire dated September 15, 2014, the applicant stated that he was "not able to do anything."

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco tab 5-325mg #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

Decision rationale: As noted on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the cardinal criteria for continuation of opioid therapy include evidence of successful return to work, improved functioning, and/or reduced pain achieved as a result of the same. Here, however, the applicant is off of work, on total temporary disability. While the attending provider did report some reduction in pain scores from 8/10 to 5/10 on one office visit, referenced above, this is, however, outweighed by the applicant's failure to return to work, the attending provider's failure to outline any meaningful improvements in function achieved as a result of ongoing Norco usage, and the applicant's own comments on an activities of daily living questionnaire dated September 15, 2014 that he was "not able to do anything" secondary to chronic pain concerns. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.