

Case Number:	CM14-0186453		
Date Assigned:	11/14/2014	Date of Injury:	06/29/2000
Decision Date:	01/05/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/21/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/10/2014

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 Anesthesia, has a subspecialty in Acupuncture & Pain 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:

59y/o male injured worker with date of injury 1/14/98 with related low back pain. Per progress report dated 10/15/14, the injured worker complained of persistent low back pain rated 9/10 in intensity radiating to the bilateral lower extremities. He described his pain as sharp shooting and stabbing type of pain. Per physical exam, spasms were noted in the lumbar paraspinal muscles and stiffness noted in the lumbar spine. Stiff and antalgic gait was noted. Limited mobility was noted in the lumbar spine secondary to pain and spasms. tenderness was noted in the lumbar facet joints bilaterally. Treatment to date has included physical therapy, home exercise program, and medication management. The date of UR decision was 10/17/14.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg PO Q6H prn #120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids; Norco.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 78, 91.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding ongoing management of opioids "Four domains have been proposed as most relevant for ongoing

monitoring of chronic pain patients on opioids: Pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant (or nonadherent) drug related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the '4 As' (Analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and any aberrant drug-taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs. "Review of the available medical records reveals no documentation to support the medical necessity of norco nor any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains, which is a recommended practice for the on-going management of opioids. Specifically, the notes do not appropriately review and document pain relief, functional status improvement, appropriate medication use, or side effects. The MTUS considers this list of criteria for initiation and continuation of opioids in the context of efficacy required to substantiate medical necessity, and they do not appear to have been addressed by the treating physician in the documentation available for review. Furthermore, efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. The documentation stated that several urine drug screens were negative for illicit substances, however, no reports were available for review. As MTUS recommends to discontinue opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.