

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0187525		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	11/18/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	08/23/2010
<b>Decision Date:</b>	01/27/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/31/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	11/12/2014

### 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 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:

33y/o male injured worker with date of injury 8/23/10 with related low back pain, right upper extremity pain, and right lower extremity radiculopathy. Per agreed medical examination dated 7/3/14, the injured worker rated his low back pain 10/10, right upper extremity pain 5/10, right elbow pain 4/10, and right lower extremity radiculopathy 5/10. He also reported headaches twice a week. He was refractory to physical therapy. Treatment to date has included medication management. The date of UR decision was 10/31/14.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Flexeril 7.5mg #180:** Overturned

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle relaxants.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle Relaxants Page(s): 63-64.

**Decision rationale:** With regard to muscle relaxants, the MTUS CPMTG states: "Recommend non-sedating muscle relaxants with caution as a second-line option for short-term treatment of acute exacerbations in patients with chronic LBP. (Chou, 2007) (Mens, 2005) (Van Tulder, 1998) (van Tulder, 2003) (van Tulder, 2006) (Schnitzer, 2004) (See, 2008) Muscle relaxants may

be effective in reducing pain and muscle tension, and increasing mobility. However, in most LBP cases, they show no benefit beyond NSAIDs in pain and overall improvement." Regarding Cyclobenzaprine: "Recommended for a short course of therapy. Limited, mixed-evidence does not allow for a recommendation for chronic use. Cyclobenzaprine is a skeletal muscle relaxant and a central nervous system depressant with similar effects to tricyclic antidepressants (e.g. amitriptyline). Cyclobenzaprine is more effective than placebo in the management of back pain, although the effect is modest and comes at the price of adverse effects." I respectfully disagree with the UR physician's assertion that the documentation indicates that this medication has been in use long term, this is not the case. Flexeril is indicated for the injured worker's low back pain. The request is medically necessary.

**Norco 10/325mg #40:** 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): 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 '4s' (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. There is no documentation comprehensively addressing this concern in the records available for my review. As MTUS recommends to discontinue opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.