

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0187899		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	11/18/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	05/26/2009
<b>Decision Date:</b>	01/07/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/13/2014
<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 Occupational Medicine, has a subspecialty in Preventive 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 low back pain, knee pain, and headaches reportedly associated with an industrial injury of May 26, 2009. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; multiple prior knee surgeries; opioid therapy; a TENS unit; a cane; a knee brace, viscosupplementation injections; and transfer of care to and from various providers in various specialties. In a Utilization Review Report dated October 13, 2014, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. It was stated that the applicant was pending a total knee arthroplasty. The claims administrator seemingly suggested that the applicant was not benefiting from Norco usage. The claims administrator stated that its decision was based on a September 20, 2014 Request for Authorization (RFA) form. In a September 20, 2014 progress note, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back and knee pain. It was stated that the applicant was working on a full-time basis and using Norco twice daily to facilitate her returning to work. The applicant's medications included Norco, naproxen, Flexeril, Prilosec, and Neurontin, it was acknowledged. It was also noted that Norco was ameliorating the applicant's ability to sleep at times and exercise on a daily basis. Trigger point injections were performed. Multiple medications were renewed. The applicant was asked to continue self-directed home physical medicine. In an October 20, 2014 progress note, the applicant stated that she was more active, performing household chores, cooking, cleaning, and other activities of daily living. The applicant was pending a total knee arthroplasty. The applicant stated that ongoing medication consumption was ameliorating her overall level of function and facilitating her ability to exercise. On an October 14, 2014 progress note, it was suggested that the applicant was working modified duty at work.

## IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325 2 tabs daily #90:** Overturned

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 74-97.

**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, the applicant has returned to and maintained full-time regular duty work status, the attending provider posited on a progress note of September 25, 2014. The applicant's ability to perform home exercises has been ameliorated as a result of ongoing medication consumption, including ongoing Norco consumption, the attending provider has suggested. The applicant is, furthermore, reportedly deriving appropriate analgesia with ongoing Norco usage, the attending provider has stated. Continuing the same, on balance, was indicated. Therefore, the request was medically necessary.