

Case Number:	CM14-0197071		
Date Assigned:	12/05/2014	Date of Injury:	02/10/2014
Decision Date:	01/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/11/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/24/2014

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 low back, neck, and mid back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of February 10, 2014. In a Utilization Review Report dated November 11, 2014, the claims administrator denied a request for Norco. The claims administrator stated that its decision was based on an October 17, 2014 progress note. The claims administrator's rationale was sparse. It was stated that the applicant initially sustained contusions and lacerations of multiple body parts in an industrial motor vehicle accident. In an October 17, 2014 progress note, handwritten, difficult to follow, not entirely legible, the applicant was given a rather proscriptive 10-pound lifting limitation. It was not clear whether the applicant was or was not working with said limitations in place. Ongoing complaints of low back pain, neck pain, and mid back pain were appreciated. Additional physical therapy was sought. The applicant exhibited a slowed gait. The attending provider stated that Norco was providing good pain relief but did not elaborate or expound further. In an earlier note dated April 8, 2014, handwritten, difficult to follow, not entirely legible, the applicant again presented with neck pain, mid scapular pain, and low back pain. The applicant was asked to continue Norco. Amrix was endorsed. Twelve sessions of manipulative therapy were endorsed. The applicant was again given the same, unchanged, rather proscriptive 10-pound lifting limitation. It was not clear whether the applicant was or was not working with said limitation in place. In a September 15, 2014 progress note, the applicant was again given a 10-pound lifting limitation. The attending provider stated that ongoing medication consumption was reducing the applicant's pain complaints from 8.5/10 without medications to 7/10 with medications.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Pharmacy Purchase of Hydroco/APAP Tab 7.5/325mg #90: Upheld

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

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. In this case, however, the applicant's work status has not been clearly outlined. A rather proscriptive 10-pound lifting limitation remains in place, seemingly unchanged, from visit to visit. While the attending provider did state in a handwritten note dated October 17, 2014 that the applicant was getting good pain relief from Norco, this was neither elaborated nor expounded upon. This was not quantified on that date. Earlier reports of the applicant's reporting a reduction in pain scores from 8.5/10 and 9/10 without medications to 7/10 with medications does appear marginal to negligible and is outweighed by the attending provider's failure to outline any meaningful improvements in function achieved as a result of ongoing medication usage as well as the attending provider's failure to clearly outline the applicant's work status from visit to visit. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.