

Case Number:	CM14-0199678		
Date Assigned:	12/10/2014	Date of Injury:	07/28/2006
Decision Date:	01/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/12/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/01/2014

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 Physical Medicine Rehabilitation 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:

This 65 year-old patient sustained an injury on 7/28/06 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Prospective Request for 1 Prescription of Norco 10/325mg #150. Diagnoses include Lumbosacral Neuritis NOS s/p L4-5 laminectomy. Conservative care has included medications, therapy, home exercise program, and modified activities/rest. The patient continues to treat for chronic symptoms. Report of 11/3/14 from the provider noted the patient with ongoing low back and bilateral lower extremity pain. Exam showed unchanged findings of no apparent distress, cognitively intact, using rolling walker; negative bilateral SLR, minimal depression with PHQ-9 score of 5/30; with normal motor strength throughout bilateral iliopsoas, quadriceps, TA, and toe flexors. It was noted Norco allowed discontinuing topically with performance of ADLs and 50% reduction in pain. The request(s) for Prospective Request for 1 Prescription of Norco 10/325mg #150 was modified for weaning on 11/12/14 citing guidelines criteria and lack of medical necessity.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Prospective Request for 1 Prescription of Norco 10/325mg #150: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen (Norco); and Opioids, Criteria for Use.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids
Page(s): 74-96.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic 2006 injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive clinical deterioration. The Prospective Request for 1 Prescription of Norco 10/325mg #150 is not medically necessary and appropriate.