

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0208143		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	12/22/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/15/1999
<b>Decision Date:</b>	02/17/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	12/12/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	12/12/2014

### 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 Physical Medicine Rehabilitation, has a subspecialty in 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:

This is a male who suffered an industrial related injury on 11/15/1999. A physician's report dated 1/17/13 noted the injured worker had complaints of back pain that radiated to the left leg. Left leg weakness was also noted. A MRI was noted to have shown significant stenosis at L3-L4 and foraminaly at L5-S1 due to a pars defect. The injured worker was taking Omeprazole, Zanaflex, Naproxen, and Norco. A physician's report dated 9/22/14 noted the injured worker continued to have complaints of back and leg pain with associated numbness and weakness. The physical examination revealed motor strength was symmetric in all muscle groups, sensory was grossly intact to light touch, the straight leg raise was negative bilaterally, palpation over the back did not elicit pain, and range of motion was restricted in the lumbar spine. Diagnoses included lumbar spondylosis, lumbar stenosis, and radiculopathy. On 12/12/14 the utilization review (UR) physician modified the request for Norco 10/325mg #180. The UR physician noted the quantity of Norco was modified to a lesser quantity due to no documentation of functional improvement or pain reduction. There was no clear indication that Norco has resulted in significantly reduced visual analog scores. Based on that information continuation and tapering of Norco is appropriate.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**1 prescription of Norco 10/325mg #180:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 8 C.C.R. 9792.20 - 9792.26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009). Page(s): 44, 47, 75-79, 120.

**Decision rationale:** Regarding the request for Norco, California Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines note that it is an opiate pain medication. Due to high abuse potential, close follow-up is recommended with documentation of analgesic effect, objective functional improvement, side effects, and discussion regarding any aberrant use. Guidelines go on to recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improved function and pain. Within the documentation available for review, there is no indication that the medication is improving the patient's function or pain (in terms of specific examples of functional improvement and percent reduction in pain or reduced NRS). As such, there is no clear indication for ongoing use of the medication. Opioids should not be abruptly discontinued, but unfortunately, there is no provision to modify the current request to allow tapering. In light of the above issues, the currently requested Norco is not medically necessary.