

Case Number:	CM15-0001697		
Date Assigned:	03/09/2015	Date of Injury:	02/08/2003
Decision Date:	04/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/20/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/05/2015

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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:
 State(s) of Licensure: Texas, New York, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine

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 55-year-old [REDACTED] beneficiary who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of February 8, 2003. In a Utilization Review Report dated December 20, 2014, the claims administrator partially approved a request for Norco and denied a request for transportation to and from medical appointments. The claims administrator stated that the request for medical transportation was not eligible for utilization review. The claims administrator referenced a December 4, 2014 progress note in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. The applicant's attorney stated that both requests for medical transportation and Norco were being appealed. On January 8, 2015, the applicant was placed off of work, on total temporary disability. The applicant was status post a failed lumbar fusion surgery in 2011 and had also undergone a failed spinal cord stimulator implantation. Ancillary complaints of neck pain and psychological stress were evident. The applicant was using a cane to move about. The attending provider stated that the applicant's pain complaints were heightened as a result of negotiating the stairs on a bus and was apparently seeking medical transportation for that purpose. The applicant's pain complaints were 6/10 with medications versus 8/10 without medications. The attending provider went on to refill Norco. The attending provider stated, through preprinted checkboxes, that Norco and Flexeril were ameliorating the applicant's activities of daily living, but declined to elaborate further.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids and Weaning of Medications.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 7) When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

Decision rationale: No, the request for Norco, a short-acting opioid, was not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. 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, however, the applicant was/is off of work, on total temporary disability, despite ongoing Norco usage. While the attending provider recounted some reduction of pain scores from 8/10 without medications to 6/10 with medications, reportedly effected as a result of ongoing Norco usage, these are/were, however, outweighed by the attending provider's failure to outline any meaningful or material improvements in function effected as a result of ongoing Norco usage (if any), and the applicant's continued difficulty performing activities of daily living as basic as standing and walking. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.