

Case Number:	CM15-0003645		
Date Assigned:	01/21/2015	Date of Injury:	01/09/2007
Decision Date:	04/23/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/30/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/08/2015

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: Connecticut, California, Virginia
 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 injured worker is a 60 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 01/09/07. Initial complaints and diagnoses are not available. Treatments to date include medications and right knee replacement. Diagnostic studies are not discussed. Current complaints include pain in the right knee and the right knee giving way on her causing a fall. In a progress note dated 11/07/14 the treating provider reports the plan of care as an x-ray of the right knee and Norco. The requested treatment is Norco, a request denied by utilization review after previous attempts were made to encourage weaning.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Retrospective request for one Norco (DOS: 12/5/14): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): (s) 78, 81.

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

Decision rationale: Chronic use of opioids is addressed thoroughly by the MTUS chronic pain guidelines and given the long history of pain treatment in this patient since the initial date of injury, consideration of the MTUS Criteria for Use of Opioids in chronic pain is appropriate. Documentation of pain and functional improvement are critical components, along with documentation of adverse effects. While the MTUS does not specifically detail a set visit frequency for re-evaluation, recommended duration between visits is 1 to 6 months. In this case, the patient clearly has concerns warranting close monitoring and treatment, to include close follow up regarding improvement in pain/function; consideration of additional expertise in pain management should be considered if there is no evidence of improvement in the long term. Per report, Utilization Review has already requested weaning. There are very few documents provided with respect to medical records, and the documents provided give no substantiating reasons that support continued use of opioids. Physical therapy has been recommended for patellofemoral joint pain, and several other notes are illegible and provide very little detail on objective exam. More detailed consideration of long-term treatment goals for pain (specifically aimed at decreased need for opioids), and further elaboration on dosing expectations in this case would be valuable. More detailed expectations should be outlined with the patient regarding the treatment plan and follow up as working to decrease opioid dependency is recommended. Consideration of other pain treatment modalities and adjuvants is also recommended. The request to continue with long-term opioid treatment is not considered in the opinion of this reviewer to be medically necessary and appropriate based on the provided documents.