

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0100580		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	06/03/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	08/21/2007
<b>Decision Date:</b>	07/01/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	05/12/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	05/26/2015

### 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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

### 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 39 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 08/21/2007. He has reported injury to the low back. The diagnoses have included chronic low back pain; lumbar degenerative disc disease; lumbosacral radiculitis; and status post lumbar rhizotomy, on 04/29/2014. Treatment to date has included medications, diagnostics, home exercise program, physical therapy, and surgical intervention. Medications have included Norco and Flexeril. A progress report from the treating physician, dated 04/10/2015, documented an evaluation with the injured worker. Currently, the injured worker complains of continued low back pain, with radicular symptoms to his lower extremities; pain is rated as 8/10 in intensity without his medications, whereas with his medications his pain is approximately 5/10 in intensity; he has managed to reduce his Norco to three tablets a day, although it has been difficult; he is willing to continue with the current dosage; sciatic symptoms have been gradually improving. Objective findings included slight tenderness and spasm noted in the bilateral lumbar paraspinal regions, with tenderness noted throughout the lumbar spine; and sensation to light touch was reduced along the posterior aspect of the right buttock and proximal thigh. The treatment plan has included the request for 1 prescription of Norco 10/325mg #120; and 1 prescription of Flexeril 10 mg #60.

### 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 #120: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use; Opioids, specific drug list, Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen; Weaning of Medications.

**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 injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The 1 prescription of Norco 10/325mg #120 is not medically necessary and appropriate.

**1 prescription of Flexeril 10mg #60: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril).

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle relaxants, pg 128.

**Decision rationale:** Guidelines do not recommend long-term use of this muscle relaxant for this chronic injury. Additionally, the efficacy in clinical trials has been inconsistent and most studies are small and of short duration. These medications may be useful for chronic musculoskeletal pain, but there are no long-term studies of their effectiveness or safety. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication or medical need for this treatment and there is no report of significant clinical findings, acute flare-up or new injury to support for its long-term use. There is no report of functional improvement resulting from its previous treatment to support further use as the patient remains unchanged. The 1 prescription of Flexeril 10mg #60 is not medically necessary and appropriate.