

Case Number:	CM15-0101937		
Date Assigned:	06/09/2015	Date of Injury:	08/09/2005
Decision Date:	07/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/27/2015

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 36 year old male with an industrial injury dated 08/09/2005. His diagnoses included lumbar strain with radiculopathy and status post left shoulder surgery. Prior treatment included limited therapy, acupuncture and medications. He presents on 02/25/2015 with complaints of flare up of his ongoing symptoms of lumbar spine and leg pain. Physical exam noted tenderness, tightness and pain with range of motion. Straight leg raise was positive on the left leg. Treatment plan included therapy, acupuncture, Norco and Soma. The injured worker was to follow up on an as needed basis. The requested treatments of 6 acupuncture sessions and 8 physical therapy visits were authorized. This request is for Norco 10 mg # 90 and Soma 350 mg # 90.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10mg, #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

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 Norco 10mg, #90 is not medically necessary or appropriate.

Soma 350mg, #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Carisoprodol (Soma), page 29.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Guidelines on muscle relaxant, Soma is not recommended for mild to moderate chronic persistent pain problems including chronic pain (other than for acute exacerbations) due to the high prevalence of adverse effects in the context of insufficient evidence of benefit as compared to other medications. 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 progressive deterioration in clinical findings, acute flare-up or new injury to support for its long-term use for this chronic injury of 2005. There is no report of functional improvement resulting from its previous treatment to support further use as the patient remains unchanged. The Soma 350mg, #90 is not medically necessary or appropriate.