

Case Number:	CM15-0108523		
Date Assigned:	06/15/2015	Date of Injury:	06/01/2012
Decision Date:	07/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/20/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/05/2015

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: 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 28 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 6/1/2012. She reported pain in the right side of her neck and upper back. Diagnoses have included cervical sprain/strain, myofascial pain, medial epicondylitis and cervical radiculitis. Treatment to date has included chiropractic treatment, acupuncture, physical therapy, a home exercise program, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) and medication. According to the progress report dated 5/4/2015, the injured worker complained of neck and upper back pain with intermittent flare-ups once or twice a month. She reported new, intermittent bilateral elbow and forearm pain when typing at work. Neck and upper back pain were described as constant pressure and tightness, then cramping and ending with burning sensation. There was occasional radiation of pain into the bilateral upper extremities, left greater than right with numbness and tingling. She complained of occasional headaches in her forehead. Physical exam revealed tenderness to palpation to the bilateral cervical paraspinal muscles, trapezius and right medial epicondyle. Authorization was requested for Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 5/325mg hours of sleep as necessary severe pain, quantity and refill; unspecified, for management of symptoms related to cervical and thoracic spine injury: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 9792.24 (Effective July 18, 2009) Title 8, California Code of Regulations.

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 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 warrants 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. 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. Consideration of other pain treatment modalities and adjuvants is also recommended. Utilization Review reasonably non-certified the request and encouraged appropriate weaning. Given the lack of clear evidence to support functional improvement on the medication and the chronic risk of continued treatment, the request for Norco is not medically necessary.