

Case Number:	CM15-0017728		
Date Assigned:	02/05/2015	Date of Injury:	02/16/2009
Decision Date:	04/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/29/2015

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, District of Columbia, Maryland
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

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 44 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 02/16/2009. She has reported pain in the neck and bilateral elbows. The diagnoses have included cervical spine strain/sprain, status post bilateral carpal tunnel releases, bilateral medial and lateral epicondylitis, and bilateral ulnar neuritis. Treatment to date has included medications, physical therapy, and home exercise program. Medications have included Norco, Synovacin, and Anaprox DS. Currently, the IW complains of numbness in her surgical incision; and increased neck pain rated 8/10 on the visual analog scale without medications, and 3-4/10 with medications. A progress note from the treating physician, dated 12/10/2014, reported objective findings to include tenderness to palpation across the cervical trapezial side; decreased and painful cervical spine range of motion; right hand diminished grip strength is present; left hand and wrist reveals healed incision, with palmar tenderness to palpation; and bilateral elbows with tenderness to palpation medially and laterally. The treatment plan included prescriptions for medications including Norco, Anaprox DS, and Synovacin. On 01/02/2015 Utilization Review modified a prescription for Norco 10/325 #120, to Norco 10/325 #60, with no refills for continued weaning. The CA MTUS was cited. On 01/29/2015, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of Norco 10/325 #120.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #120: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 78, 91.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding ongoing management of opioids "Four domains have been proposed as most relevant for ongoing monitoring of chronic pain patients on opioids: Pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant (or nonadherent) drug related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the 4 As (Analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and any aberrant drug-taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs." Review of the available medical records reveals no documentation to support the medical necessity of Norco nor any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains, which is a recommended practice for the on-going management of opioids. Specifically, the notes do not appropriately review and document pain relief, functional status improvement, appropriate medication use, or side effects. The MTUS considers this list of criteria for initiation and continuation of opioids in the context of efficacy required to substantiate medical necessity, and they do not appear to have been addressed by the treating physician in the documentation available for review. Furthermore, efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. There is no documentation comprehensively addressing this concern in the records available for my review. As MTUS recommends to discontinue opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.