

Case Number:	CM15-0136915		
Date Assigned:	07/24/2015	Date of Injury:	05/17/1999
Decision Date:	08/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/15/2015

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: Texas, New York, California
 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 applicant is a represented 58-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain with derivative complaints of anxiety and depression reportedly associated with an industrial injury of May 17, 1999. In a Utilization Review report dated July 8, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. The claims administrator referenced an RFA form received on June 29, 2015 in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On July 9, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back pain status post earlier failed spine surgery. The attending provider stated that the applicant was working at a paying job. The applicant was using Norco two tablets four times daily for chronic intractable pain, it was reported. The attending provider stated that the applicant was functioning well in the home and community and able to perform activities of daily living such as self-care, personal hygiene, shopping, reading, and watching television as a result of ongoing medication consumption. Norco, Tizanidine, and Meloxicam were renewed. The attending provider stated that the applicant had had a urine drug test which was consistent with prescribed medications. In a July 29, 2015 progress note, the attending provider stated that ongoing medication consumption had ameliorated the applicant's ability to work at a rate of 34 hours a week. The attending provider posited that ongoing medication consumption had ameliorated the applicant's ability to exercise, walk, shop, read, etc.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #240: Overturned

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 7) When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

Decision rationale: Yes, the request for Norco, a short-acting opioid, was medically necessary, medically appropriate, and indicated here. As noted on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the cardinal criteria for continuation of opioid therapy include evidence of successful return to work, improved functioning, and/or reduced pain achieved as a result of the same. Here, multiple progress notes of mid-2015, referenced above, suggested that the applicant had returned to work at a rate of 34 hours a week, was deriving appropriate analgesia from ongoing medication consumption, and was performing home exercises, household chores, shopping, and the like independently. The attending provider posited that all of the foregoing had been ameliorated and/or facilitated as a result of ongoing medication consumption, including ongoing Norco usage. Continuing the same, on balance, was indicated. Therefore, the request was medically necessary.