

Case Number:	CM15-0138072		
Date Assigned:	07/31/2015	Date of Injury:	10/16/2009
Decision Date:	09/25/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/14/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/16/2015

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 50-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic neck and shoulder pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of October 16, 2009. In a Utilization Review report dated July 2, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. The claims administrator referenced a June 17, 2015 progress note in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On February 23, 2015, the applicant reported multifocal complaints of neck, arm, shoulder, elbow, wrist, and finger pain. The applicant was off of work and had not worked since November 2014, it was reported. The applicant was using Norco and Voltaren as of this point in time. Moderate-to-severe shoulder pain complaints were reported. Little seeming discussion of medication efficacy transpired at this point. On June 17, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of neck, shoulder, elbow, and finger pain, at times moderate to severe. The applicant was using Norco and Voltaren for pain relief, it was reported. It was stated that the applicant was working regular duty as of this point in time after having missed work between November 2014 and March 2015 owing to other unspecified issues. The applicant was given an elbow epicondylar injection. It was suggested that the applicant could consider a shoulder surgery. The applicant was returned to regular duty work. The attending provider suggested toward the bottom of the note that usage of Norco was proving beneficial in terms of attenuating the applicant's at-times severe pain complaints. The attending provider suggested that the applicant continue home exercises.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 7.5/325mg #200: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, Weaning of Medications Page(s): 78-80, 91, 124.

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, the applicant had apparently returned to and maintained full-time, regular duty work status, with ongoing Norco usage; it was reported on June 17, 2015. The applicant was deriving appropriate analgesia from the same and was apparently performing home exercises, the treating provider suggested on that date. Continuing the same, on balance, was indicated. Therefore, the request was medically necessary.