

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0138513		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	07/28/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	06/14/1994
<b>Decision Date:</b>	09/02/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	07/16/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	07/17/2015

### 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 61-year-old male with an industrial injury dated 06/10/1994. His diagnoses included revision lumbar fusion thoracic 8- lumbar 2, status post thoracic 12 to lumbar 2 posterior fusion, status post decompression and fusion of lumbar 4- sacral 1, status post removal of hardware of lumbar spine and right cervical 7 radiculopathy secondary to cervical 6-7 disc herniation. Prior treatment included medications, surgery and home exercise plan. He presents on 06/24/2015 requesting refills of Norco, which he was previously receiving through the Veteran's Administration. Physical exam of the lumbar spine noted restricted range of motion with pain. There was muscle spasm and guarding present. The urine drug screen of 04/16/2015 was consistent. The treatment plan included pain medications. The treatment request is for Norco 10/325 mg quantity 180.00.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325mg Qty: 180. 00: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for use of Opioids.

**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 non-adherent) drug related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the 4 A's (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 or any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains, which is a recommended practice for the ongoing 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. Efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. It was noted that UDS dated 4/16/15 was consistent with prescribed medications. CURES report was not available. As MTUS recommends discontinuing opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed, therefore in not medically necessary. It should be noted that the UR physician has certified a modification of the request for the purpose of weaning.