

Case Number:	CM15-0139268		
Date Assigned:	07/29/2015	Date of Injury:	02/15/2005
Decision Date:	08/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/24/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	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: Texas, Florida, 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 injured worker (IW) is a 51-year-old male who sustained an industrial injury 02/15/2005. Diagnoses/impressions include back disorder not otherwise specified; cervical syndrome not elsewhere classified; post-laminectomy syndrome of the cervical region; and lumbago. Treatment to date has included medications, physical therapy, laminotomy, implanted intrathecal medication pump, neck, and back fusion. According to the office notes dated 6/19/15, the IW was seen for his medication pump refill. His seven-day average pain score was 7/10. He received a total of 20 ml of Morphine sulfate 20mg/ml. His regular medications were Soma, Vicodin, Phenergan, Norco 10/325mg, Norco 5/325mg and topical Duragesic patches. He was reportedly stable on his medication regimen for greater than six months, with optimal improvement of function and activities of daily living. A request was made for Norco 10/325mg #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 Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen (Norco), Opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 8 C.C.R. 9792.20 & 9792.26 Page(s): 79, 80 and 88 of 127.

Decision rationale: This claimant was injured 10 years ago with a back disorder, cervical syndrome, post-laminectomy syndrome of the cervical region; and lumbago. Treatment to date included medications, an implanted intrathecal medication pump and neck and back fusion. As of June 2015, the pain was 7/10. He received a total of 20 ml of Morphine sulfate 20mg/ml in the pain pump. His regular medications were Soma, Vicodin, Phenergan, Norco 10/325mg, Norco 5/325mg and topical Duragesic patches. There is mention of "optimal" function and ADL, but no specifics of objective functional improvement documentation. The current California web-based MTUS collection was reviewed in addressing this request. They note in the Chronic Pain section: When to Discontinue Opioids: Weaning should occur under direct ongoing medical supervision as a slow taper except for the below mentioned possible indications for immediate discontinuation. They should be discontinued: (a) If there is no overall improvement in function, unless there are extenuating circumstances. When to Continue Opioids (a) If the patient has returned to work (b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain. In the clinical records provided, it is not clearly evident these key criteria have been met in this case. Moreover, in regards to the long term use of opiates, the MTUS also poses several analytical necessity questions such as: has the diagnosis changed, what other medications is the patient taking, are they effective, producing side effects, what treatments have been attempted since the use of opioids, and what is the documentation of pain and functional improvement and compare to baseline. These are important issues, and they have not been addressed in this case. As shared earlier, there especially is no documentation of functional improvement with the regimen. The request for the opiate usage is not medically necessary per MTUS guideline review.