

Case Number:	CM15-0143079		
Date Assigned:	08/04/2015	Date of Injury:	08/14/2013
Decision Date:	09/23/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/29/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/23/2015

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: Florida

Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, 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 40 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on August 14, 2013. The mechanism of injury was not found in the medical records. The injured worker has been treated for neck, back and right knee complaints. The diagnoses have included knee pain, lumbago, long-term use of other medications, thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis unspecified, cervical-thoracic or lumbar facet arthropathy, pain in joint involving the pelvic region and thigh and headaches. Treatment and evaluation to date has included medications, radiological studies, electrodiagnostic studies, urine drug testing, knee brace and physical therapy. The injured worker was not working. Current documentation dated June 15, 2015 notes that the injured worker reported continued headaches, back pain and right knee pain. The pain was rated an 8 out of 10 the visual analogue scale with medications. Examination of the right knee revealed tenderness to palpation over the joint line, decreased range of motion and a positive McMurray's test. Muscle strength-tone of the knee revealed atrophy. Examination of the lumbar spine revealed tenderness of the spine and facet joints and a decreased range of motion. Medication included Norco for pain control. The injured worker noted that he was unable to do anything with medication. With medication he is able to cook, do laundry, shop, garden, bathe, dress and drive. The treating physician's plan of care included a request for Norco 10-325 mg # 180.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #180: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) pain, opioids.

Decision rationale: The medical records report ongoing pain that is helped subjectively by continued use of opioid. The medical records do not indicate or document any formal opioid risk mitigation tool use or assessment or indicate use of UDS or other risk tool. ODG supports ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Information from family members or other caregivers should be considered in determining the patient's response to treatment. The 4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring: 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 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. Given the medical records do not document such ongoing monitoring, the medical records do not support the continued use of opioids such as norco.