

Case Number:	CM15-0145579		
Date Assigned:	08/06/2015	Date of Injury:	02/06/2014
Decision Date:	09/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/27/2015

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 25-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic low back, foot, and ankle pain with derivative allegations of major depressive disorder (MDD) and reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD) reportedly associated with an industrial injury of February 6, 2014. In a Utilization Review report dated July 8, 2015, the claims administrator partially approved a request for Norco, apparently for weaning or tapering purposes. The claims administrator referenced an RFA form received on June 30, 2015 in its determination, along with an associated progress note of June 29, 2015. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On August 13, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back, foot, and ankle pain with derivative complaints of depression. The applicant was on Norco for pain relief. The applicant stated that his pain complaints were impacting all aspects of his life, including difficulty dealing with his family. The applicant was not working. The applicant remained significantly depressed, it was reported and was having difficulty sleeping. The attending provider acknowledged that the applicant was "not getting much benefit" from either Norco or Neurontin. Lyrica was introduced at the bottom of the note. The attending provider ceased both Norco and Neurontin on this date.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 MG #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids.

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

Decision rationale: No, the request for Norco, a short-acting opioid, was not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or 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, however, the applicant was off of work, it was acknowledged on August 13, 2015. The attending provider himself reported that the applicant was not deriving appropriate benefit from Norco usage. The applicant was having difficulty interacting with his family, socializing, and sleeping, it was reported on August 13, 2015. It did not appear, in short, that ongoing usage of Norco had proven particularly profitable in terms of the parameters set forth on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines for continuation of opioid therapy. The attending provider ultimately reached the same conclusion that August 13, 2015 and also suggested discontinuation of Norco on that date. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.