

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0162198		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	08/28/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	05/04/2005
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/13/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/13/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/19/2015

### 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 [REDACTED] beneficiary who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain (LBP) reportedly associated with an industrial injury of May 4, 2005. In a Utilization Review report dated August 13, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. A partial approval was issued for weaning or tapering purposes. Neurontin, conversely, was approved. The claims administrator referenced a July 31, 2015 office visit in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On said July 31, 2015 office visit, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back, neck, and leg pain. It was suggested that the applicant was off of work and had not worked since the date of injury, i.e., over 10 years prior. 2/10 pain with medications versus 8/10 pain without medications was reported. The attending provider stated that the applicant's medications were beneficial in terms of improving the applicant's quality of life but did not elaborate further. Neurontin and Norco were renewed. The note was very difficult to follow, was 23 pages long, and did mingle historical issues with current issues. Permanent work restrictions were renewed at the bottom of the note, although it was acknowledged that the applicant was not working with said limitations in place.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10-325 mg, 180 count:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids, criteria for use.

**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 and had not worked since the date of injury, some 10 years prior, the treating provider reported on July 31, 2015. The applicant had given up her job owing to ongoing pain complaints, it was reported. While the attending provider did recount a reported reduction in pain scores from 8/10 without medications to 2/10 with medications, these reports were, however, outweighed by the applicant's failure to return to work and the attending provider's failure to identify meaningful, material, and/or substantive improvements in function (if any) effected as a result of ongoing Norco usage. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.