

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0167649		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/08/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/06/1997
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/13/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/03/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/26/2015

### 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] employee who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain (LBP) reportedly associated with an industrial injury of September 6, 1997. In a Utilization Review report dated August 3, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. An RFA form received on July 27, 2015 was referenced in the determination. The claims administrator also cited a July 21, 2015 progress note in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On June 26, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of neck, mid back, and low back pain, 5-7/10. The attending provider reported 5/10 pain with medications versus 7/10 pain without medications. The attending provider noted that the applicant was having difficulty doing her job, it was stated in one section of the note. Norco was endorsed on a twice-daily basis. Work restrictions were imposed. It was suggested that Norco was being employed at a heightened dosage on this date. On May 29, 2015, the attending provider seemingly suggested that the applicant was working despite ongoing pain complaints. Norco was endorsed. The attending provider contended that the applicant was deriving appropriate analgesia from ongoing Norco usage and also suggested that Norco was facilitating performance of activities of daily living. On July 21, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back pain with associated radicular pain complaints. Norco was renewed. The attending provider reiterated that the applicant was working despite ongoing pain complaints. The attending provider suggested that the applicant consult a surgeon. The applicant exhibited a normal gait; it was suggested on this occasion.

## IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 7.5/325 mg Qty 60:** Overturned

**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:** Yes, the request for Norco, a short-acting opioid, was 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, the applicant had returned to and/or maintained successful return to work status, the treating provider contended on various dates, including on July 21, 2015, June 22, 2015, and May 29, 2015. The attending provider contended on various dates that ongoing usage of Norco was facilitating the applicant's performance of activities of daily living, including work and also suggested that the applicant was deriving appropriate analgesia from the same. Continuing the same, on balance, thus, was indicated. Therefore, the request was medically necessary.