

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0168239		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/08/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	01/25/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/14/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/14/2015
<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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

### 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 38-year-old male who sustained an injury on 1-25-13 resulting when he was removing metal from scaffolding when it collapsed and he fell two stories, approximately 20 feet. He was diagnosed with a L1 compression fracture and placed in a Jewett torso brace that he wore for 6 months. Treatment included physical therapy after a few months. Diagnoses include lumbar decompression fracture; myalgia; lumbar strain; lumbar radicular pain; lumbar facet joint pain; degenerative disc disease, lumbar; lumbar discogenic pain syndrome; low back pain; chronic pain syndrome. Diagnostic testing include Lumbar CT scan (1-25-13); X-rays lumbar spine (2-18-13); thoracic (3-16-13); electromyogram and nerve conduction studies. The medical records show Norco 10-325 mg has been prescribed since at least 7-2-14 and the records show urine drug test done on 12-1-14 was negative for Norco and as noted on the report (1-17-15) he was taking Norco as needed and paying for it on his own. A urine test was done on 3-24-15 shows positive for Hydrocodone and Hydro morphine; and again on 5-28-15 with the same results. The medical record (4-16-15) shows he has continue low back pain, stabbing, aching, and radiating to his right upper thigh and bilateral calves. He rates the pain with medication as 3 out of 10. It was noted on the qualified medical examination report (6-9-15) he complains of lower back pain with pressure, numbness down both legs; activities of daily living shows discomfort in most activities. Current medications listed were Omeprazole, Flexeril; Naproxen 550 mg; Norco-325 three times a day; Effexor daily. On 7-9-15, he complains of the same low back pains and was taking Norco for the severe pain. He walks daily to stay active. The pain is worse with prolonged sitting, lying down, bending and lifting. Current requested treatments

Norco 10-325 mg, 1 tablet every 6 hours as needed #90. UR date 8-14-15 non-certified as prescribed on 8-6-15.

### **IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES**

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

**Norco 10/325mg, 1 tab every 6 hours as needed, #90, prescribed 08/06/15: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Pain Chapter, Opioids, criteria for use; Pain Chapter, Opioids for chronic pain.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines opioids Page(s): 76-85.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on opioids states for ongoing management: On-Going Management. Actions Should Include: (a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. (b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. (c) Office: 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 4A'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 "4A'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. (Passik, 2000) (d) Home: To aid in pain and functioning assessment, the patient should be requested to keep a pain diary that includes entries such as pain triggers, and incidence of end-of-dose pain. It should be emphasized that using this diary will help in tailoring the opioid dose. This should not be a requirement for pain management. (e) Use of drug screening or inpatient treatment with issues of abuse, addiction, or poor pain control. (f) Documentation of misuse of medications (doctor-shopping, uncontrolled drug escalation, drug diversion). (g) Continuing review of overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control. (h) Consideration of a consultation with a multidisciplinary pain clinic if doses of opioids are required beyond what is usually required for the condition or pain does not improve on opioids in 3 months. Consider a psych consult if there is evidence of depression, anxiety or irritability. Consider an addiction medicine consult if there is evidence of substance misuse. When to Continue Opioids: (a) If the patient has returned to work; (b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain (Washington, 2002) (Colorado, 2002) (Ontario, 2000) (VA/DoD, 2003) (Maddox-AAPM/APS, 1997) (Wisconsin, 2004) (Warfield, 2004). The long-term use of

this medication class is not recommended per the California MTUS unless there documented evidence of benefit with measurable outcome measures and improvement in function. There is no documented significant improvement in VAS scores for significant periods of time. There are no objective measurements of improvement in function. Therefore, not all criteria for the ongoing use of opioids have been met and the request is not medically necessary.