

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0188932		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/30/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	10/27/2009
<b>Decision Date:</b>	11/20/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/28/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	09/25/2015

### 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: California, Oregon, Washington  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Orthopedic Surgery

### 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 41 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on October 27, 2009, incurring mid and low back injuries. He was diagnosed with a thoracic strain and lumbar strain. X-rays of the thoracic spine revealed degenerative disc disease. Treatment included pain medications, anti-inflammatory drugs, neuropathic medications, muscle relaxants, physical therapy, acupuncture, chiropractic sessions, and modified work duties. Currently, the injured worker complained of constant low back pain aggravated by activity, bending, prolonged sitting and standing. He noted some difficulty in sleeping due to the pain. He rated his pain 4 out of 10 on a pain scale from 0 to 10 with medications, and 7 out of 10 without pain medications. His pain was improved with bed rest. Physical therapy, chiropractic sessions and acupuncture gave him limited pain relief. Pain medications gave him temporary relief of the chronic back pain. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization on September 22, 2015, included a prescription for Norco 7.5-325 mg, #120. On August 27, 2015, a request for a prescription for Norco #120 was modified to a prescription for Norco #90 for weaning to off over three months.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 7.5/325mg Q6 #120:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS General Approaches 2004, Section(s): Initial Approaches to Treatment, and Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

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

**Decision rationale:** According to the CA MTUS/Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, page 80, opioids. A therapeutic trial of opioids should not be employed until the patient has failed a trial of non-opioid analgesics. Opioids may be continued if the patient has returned to work and the patient has improved functioning and pain. Guidelines recommend 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. The ODG-TWC pain section comments specifically on criteria for the use of drug screening for ongoing opioid treatment. Based upon the records reviewed there is insufficient evidence to support chronic use of narcotics. There is lack of demonstrated functional improvement, percentage of relief, demonstration of urine toxicology compliance or increase in activity from the exam notes provided. Therefore the determination is for non-certification. The request is not medically necessary.