

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0189520		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/01/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/19/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	11/13/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/26/2015
<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, District of Columbia, Maryland  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

### 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 39 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 9-19-2014. The injured worker is undergoing treatment for cervical pain and right arm and right shoulder pain. Medical records dated 7-13-2015 indicate the injured worker complains of right shoulder pain described as worsening and rated 8 out of 10. He reports difficulty sleeping. Therapy note dated 8-3-2015 indicates neck, shoulder and arm pain rated 5 out of 10 at best. Physical exam dated 7-13-2015 notes moderate pain, cervical brace and holding right arm flexed and against torso. Treatment to date has included surgery, physical therapy, epidural steroid injection, Norco (since at least 1-7-15), Amitriptyline, Celebrex and cervical brace. The original utilization review dated 8-26-2015 indicates the request for Norco 5-325mg #40 is modified.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 5/325 mg Qty 40: 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.

**Decision rationale:** Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding on-going management of opioids "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 '4 A's' (Analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and any 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." Review of the available medical records reveals no documentation to support the medical necessity of Norco nor any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains, which is a recommended practice for the on-going management of opioids. Specifically, the notes do not appropriately review and document pain relief, functional status improvement, appropriate medication use, or side effects. The MTUS considers this list of criteria for initiation and continuation of opioids in the context of efficacy required to substantiate medical necessity, and they do not appear to have been addressed by the treating physician in the documentation available for review. Furthermore, efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. There is no documentation comprehensively addressing this concern in the records available for my review. As MTUS recommends discontinuing opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, the request is not medically necessary.