

Case Number:	CM15-0191849		
Date Assigned:	10/05/2015	Date of Injury:	02/02/2012
Decision Date:	11/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/29/2015

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, Florida, 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:

This is a 65 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 2-2-2012. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for right elbow fracture, right shoulder pain, wrist pain, chronic right buttock and lower extremity pain and right knee pain. Medical records (4-1-2015 to 8-20-2015) indicate ongoing right knee pain rated 8 to 9 out of 10 without medications and 6 out of 10 with medications. She reported improvement in activities of daily living with medication. She stated she was able to walk and stand for an hour with medications and only a half hour without medications. Per the treating physician (8-20-2015), the injured worker was limited to sedentary work and was not currently working. The physical exam (4/1/2015 to 8-20-2015) revealed significant tenderness to right knee. She ambulated with a slight limp. Treatment has included right total knee replacement, and medications (Norco since at least 4-16-2014). The treating physician indicates (8-20-2015) that the urine drug screens have been consistent. The request for authorization dated (8-28-2015) was for Norco. The original Utilization Review (UR) (9-8-2015) modified a request for Norco from quantity 180 to 150.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg QTY 180.00: 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 for chronic pain.

Decision rationale: The current California web-based MTUS collection was reviewed in addressing this request. They note in the Chronic Pain section: When to Discontinue Opioids: Weaning should occur under direct ongoing medical supervision as a slow taper except for the below mentioned possible indications for immediate discontinuation. They should be discontinued: (a) If there is no overall improvement in function, unless there are extenuating circumstances. When to Continue Opioids(a) If the patient has returned to work (b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain. In the clinical records provided, it is not clearly evident these key criteria have been met in this case. Moreover, in regards to the long term use of opiates, the MTUS also poses several analytical necessity questions such as: has the diagnosis changed, what other medications is the patient taking, are they effective, producing side effects, what treatments have been attempted since the use of opioids, and what is the documentation of pain and functional improvement and compare to baseline. These are important issues, and they have not been addressed in this case. As shared earlier, there especially is no documentation of functional improvement with the regimen. The request for the opiate usage is not medically necessary per MTUS guideline review.