

Case Number:	CM15-0193149		
Date Assigned:	10/07/2015	Date of Injury:	09/04/2000
Decision Date:	11/18/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/25/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/01/2015

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: Maryland, Texas, Virginia

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Allergy and Immunology, Rheumatology

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 45 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 9-4-2000. Medical records indicate the worker is undergoing treatment for lumbosacral strain, sciatica and myofascial pain. A recent progress report dated 9-8-2015, reported the injured worker complained of back pain rated 7-8 out of 10. Physical examination revealed trigger points in the lower latissimus dorsi, gluteus maximus, gluteus medius and quadrates lumborum bilaterally. Treatment to date has included massage therapy, occupational therapy, TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation), aquatic therapy, acupuncture, epidural steroid injection, functional restoration program, physical therapy and Norco (since at least May 2013). The physician is requesting Norco 10-325mg #180. On 9-25-2015, the Utilization Review modified the request for Norco 10-325mg #180 to #135.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #180 per 9/8/15 order: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids, criteria for use, Weaning of Medications.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids, criteria for use. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Opioids, Pain.

Decision rationale: ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for low back pain "except for short use for severe cases, not to exceed 2 weeks." The patient has exceeded the 2 week recommended treatment length for opioid usage. MTUS does not discourage use of opioids past 2 weeks, but does state that "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 treating physician does not fully document the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, pain relief, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. The UR modified the request to allow for weaning which is appropriate. As such, the request for Norco 10/325mg #180 per 9/8/15 order is not medically necessary.