

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0199592		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/14/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/07/1998
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/01/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	09/16/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/10/2015

### 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 57 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 11-7-1998. The medical records indicate that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for lumbago and disc degeneration (unspecified). According to the progress report dated 8-25-2015, the injured worker presented with complaints of low back and right leg pain. The pain is described as sharp, aching, and throbbing. On a subjective pain scale, he rates his pain 5 out of 10 with medications and 7 out of 10 without. The physical examination of the lumbar spine was not indicated. The current medications are Norco (since at least 1-27-2015). Previous diagnostic studies were not specified. Treatments to date include medication management and TENS unit. Work status is described as permanently disabled. The treatment plan included the addition of Amrix for spasms. The original utilization review (9-16-2015) partially approved a request for Norco 10-325mg #72 (original request was for #180). The request for Amrix 15mg #30 was non-certified.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Amrix 15mg #30:** 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): Muscle relaxants (for pain).

**Decision rationale:** With regard to muscle relaxants, the MTUS CPMTG states: "Recommend non-sedating muscle relaxants with caution as a second-line option for short-term treatment of acute exacerbations in patients with chronic LBP. (Chou, 2007) (Mens, 2005) (Van Tulder, 1998) (Van Tulder, 2003) (Van Tulder, 2006) (Schnitzer, 2004) (See, 2008) Muscle relaxants may be effective in reducing pain and muscle tension, and increasing mobility. However, in most LBP cases, they show no benefit beyond NSAIDs in pain and overall improvement." Regarding Cyclobenzaprine: "Recommended for a short course of therapy. Limited, mixed-evidence does not allow for a recommendation for chronic use. Cyclobenzaprine is a skeletal muscle relaxant and a central nervous system depressant with similar effects to tricyclic antidepressants (e.g. Amitriptyline). Cyclobenzaprine is more effective than placebo in the management of back pain, although the effect is modest and comes at the price of adverse effects." Per p41 of the MTUS guidelines, the effect is greatest in the first 4 days of treatment, suggesting that shorter courses may be better. Treatment is recommended for the treatment of acute spasm limited to a maximum of 2-3 weeks. The documentation submitted for review indicates that the injured worker has been using this medication since at least 7/2015. There is no documentation of the patient's specific functional level or percent improvement with treatment with Amrix. As it is recommended only for short-term use, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.

**Norco 10/325mg #180:** 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, 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 nonadherent) 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 insufficient documentation to support the medical necessity of Norco nor sufficient 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 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. Per the medical records, it was noted that the injured worker rated pain 7/10 without medications and 5/10 with medications. Efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. UDS dated 6/23/15 was positive for opiates. As MTUS recommends to discontinue opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.