

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0201254		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/16/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/08/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/04/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/12/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/14/2015

### 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 37-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 3-8-11. The documentation on 9-25-15 noted that the injured worker has complaints of low back pain with radiation of pain, numbness and tingling down the posterolateral portion of the bilateral lower extremities through to the feet. The injured worker reports the pain is made worse with prolonged stooping, repetitive bending and twisting and with heavy lifting. The injured workers pain is 7 to 8 out of 10 on visual analog scale without medication and with medication goes down to a 3 to 4 out of 10. The diagnoses have included postlaminectomy syndrome, lumbar region; sciatica and stenosis spinal lumbar. Treatment to date has included epidural steroid injection and norco. The original utilization review (10-12-15) modified the request for norco 10-325mg #120 to #96.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325 mg #120:** 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 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 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 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. Per the medical records, the injured worker rated pain without medication 7-8/10 and 3-4/10 with medication. Efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. It was noted that UDS dated 8/14/15 was negative for opioids. CURES report dated 8/14/15 was appropriate. As MTUS recommends discontinuing opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity is not necessary.