

Case Number:	CM15-0209726		
Date Assigned:	10/28/2015	Date of Injury:	12/01/2004
Decision Date:	12/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/26/2015

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, New York, 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:

The applicant is a represented 50-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic neck and low back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of December 1, 2004. In a Utilization Review report dated October 15, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. The claims administrator referenced a September 2, 2015 office visit in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On September 2, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing issues with chronic neck, low back, and shoulder pain, apparently attributed to an industrial motor vehicle accident. 5-6/10 pain without medications versus 4-5/10 with medications was reported. Activities of daily living as basic as sitting, standing, walking, lifting, bending, and lying down remained problematic, the treating provider reported. The applicant was using Norco, Nexium, Flector patches, an unspecified muscle relaxant, Colace, and Lyrica, the treating provider reported. Ancillary issues with a trigger thumb were reported. The applicant was no longer on disability, the treating provider reported. Multiple medications were renewed and/or continued while the applicant was seemingly kept off of work.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 5/325mg #90: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids, criteria for use.

Decision rationale: No, the request for Norco, a short-acting opioid, was not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. As noted on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the cardinal criteria for continuation of opioid therapy include evidence of successful return to work, improved functioning, and/or reduced pain achieved as a result of the same. Here, however, the applicant was off of work, the treating provider reported on September 2, 2015. The applicant was reportedly receiving both Workers' Compensation indemnity benefits and disability insurance benefits, the treating provider suggested on that date. While the treating provider did recount a low-grade reduction in pain scores from 5-6/10 without medications versus 4-5/10 pain with medications, these reports were, however, outweighed by the applicant's failure to return to work, the applicant's continued difficulty performing activities of daily living as basic as sitting, standing, walking, lifting, bending, etc., and the attending provider's failure to identify meaningful, material, and/or substantive improvements in function (if any) effected as a result of ongoing Norco usage. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.