

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0025354		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	02/17/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/19/2012
<b>Decision Date:</b>	03/27/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	02/04/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/10/2015

### 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

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

### 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 36 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on November 19, 2012. The diagnoses have included lumbar disc displacement and lumbosacral neuritis or radiculopathy. Treatment to date has included an MRI, epidural steroid injection, work modifications, and pain medication. The Utilization Review noted that he had been treated with physical therapy, but there was no reference of physical therapy in the provided medication records. On January 28, 2015, the treating physician noted intermittent lower back pain with radiation to bilateral legs. There was numbness and tingling of bilateral legs, which was greater to the left leg. The physical exam revealed lumbosacral paraspinal tenderness, positive bilateral straight leg raise causes lower back pain, and pain with range of motion. The treatment plan included pain medication. On February 4, 2015, Utilization Review non-certified a prescription for Norco 10-325mg, by mouth 2 times per day, #60, noting the discussion with the treating physician to use the lowest dose to improve pain and function, and his agreeing to switch the claimant to tramadol at the next visit. The California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS), Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines was cited.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10-325mg #60:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use Page(s): 78, 80.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page(s) 74-96.

**Decision rationale:** Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The Norco 10-325mg #60 is not medically necessary and appropriate.