

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0027393		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	02/19/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	04/01/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/15/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	01/29/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/13/2015

### 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 44 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 4/1/11. The injured worker has complaints of ongoing neck and bilateral upper extremity pain with some numbness and tingling in the palmar surface of the left hand. The documentation noted her pain goes from 7/10 down to a 4/10 with use of Norco. She is currently working and able to perform her usual work. The diagnoses have included neck pain; chronic bilateral shoulder pain; bilateral carpal tunnel release in January 2010 and depression and anxiety due to chronic pain. The documentation noted that she had a left carpal tunnel release with cyst removal on 12/1/14. According to the utilization review performed on 1/29/15, the requested Norco 10/325 mg quantity 180 has been non-certified. CA MTUS, Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines were referenced regarding Norco were used in the utilization review.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325 mg quantity 180:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids; Norco.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids  
Page(s): 78, 91.

**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. The most recent progress note dated February 5, 2015 includes no documentation to support the medical necessity of Norco 10/325 mg nor any 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. Furthermore, efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. There is no documentation comprehensively addressing this concern in the records available for my review. As MTUS recommends discontinuing opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.