

Case Number:	CM15-0029112		
Date Assigned:	02/23/2015	Date of Injury:	12/04/2004
Decision Date:	04/02/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/10/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/17/2015

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 [REDACTED] beneficiary who has filed a claim for chronic neck pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of December 4, 2004. In a Utilization Review Report dated February 10, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Vicodin. An RFA form received on February 2, 2015 and a progress note of January 2, 2015 were referenced in the determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On October 10, 2014, it was acknowledged that the applicant was using Vicodin up to four times daily. An extremely proscriptive 5-pound lifting limitation was endorsed at that point. It did not appear that the applicant was working at that point in time. On September 11, 2014, the applicant was reportedly using Vicodin at a rate of six times daily. Ongoing complaints of neck pain were noted. The applicant was apparently becoming despondent owing to his chronic pain issues. Moderate pain was reported. On November 25, 2014, it was stated that the applicant was using anywhere between five and seven tablets of Norco. It was stated that the applicant had received cervical spine surgery on October 30, 2014. Significant pain was noted. The applicant's work status was not furnished. On January 27, 2015, the applicant again reported ongoing complaints of neck pain several months removed from the cervical spine surgery of October 30, 2014. The applicant was using Norco anywhere from five to six tablets daily. The attending provider stated that the applicant was having only "minimal discomfort."

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Vicodin 5/300mg #120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 91.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen (Anexsia, Co-Gesic, Hycet™; Lorcet, Lortab; Margesic- H, Maxidone™; Norco, Stagesic, Vicodin, Xodol, Zydone; Page(s): Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines 8 C.C.R. 9792.20 - 9792.26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) Page 91 of 127.

Decision rationale: No, the request for Vicodin, a short-acting opioid, was not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. While page 91 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines does acknowledge that Vicodin is indicated in the treatment of moderate-to-moderately severe pain, in this case, however, the applicant was described as having only "minimal discomfort" as of the January 27, 2015 progress note on which Norco was renewed. It was not clear why the applicant was still using Vicodin at a rate of four times daily if the applicant's discomfort and pain complaints were only in the minimal range. No clear, compelling, or cogent case was set forth for continuation of Vicodin on or around the date in question. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.