

Case Number:	CM15-0035612		
Date Assigned:	03/04/2015	Date of Injury:	01/10/2012
Decision Date:	04/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/29/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/25/2015

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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & General Preventive 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 injured worker is a 49-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 01/10/2012. He has reported subsequent back pain and was diagnosed with lumbar intervertebral disc disease. Treatment to date has included oral and injectable pain medication and physical therapy. In a progress note dated 12/01/2014, the injured worker complained of constant severe low back pain radiating to the left leg that was rated as 9/10. Objective findings revealed palpable spasm of the lumbar paraspinals of L4 on the left and decreased range of motion of the low back. A request for authorization of Norco was made. On 01/29/2015, Utilization Review non-certified a request for Norco, noting that based on the injured worker's history of drug abuse, inappropriate use of opioids and lack of information regarding evaluation for drug and alcohol addiction, dependence or abuse. MTUS and ACOEM guidelines were cited.

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 100: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-96. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Pain, Opioids.

Decision rationale: ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for low back pain "except for short use for severe cases, not to exceed 2 weeks." The patient has exceeded the 2 week recommended treatment length for opioid usage. MTUS does not discourage use of opioids past 2 weeks, but does state that 'ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life." The treating physician does not fully document the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, intensity of pain after taking opioid, pain relief, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Additionally, medical documents indicate that the patient has been on Norco in excess of the recommended 2-week limit. As such, the request for Norco 10/325 mg quantity 100 is not medically necessary.