

Case Number:	CM15-0040670		
Date Assigned:	03/10/2015	Date of Injury:	04/29/2013
Decision Date:	04/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/24/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/02/2015

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: Indiana

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 injured worker is a 50-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 04/29/2013. He has reported subsequent neck and back pain and was diagnosed with cervical degenerative disc disease, cervical radiculopathy, cervical stenosis, lumbar spinal stenosis and lumbar radiculopathy. Treatment to date has included oral pain medication, epidural steroid injections and physical therapy. In a progress note dated 02/09/2015, the injured worker complained of 9/10 neck and back pain. Objective findings were notable for pain from the base of the spine to the upper back and down the left arm, low back pain radiating down both legs, scoliosis to the left, left sciatic notch tenderness slight weakness of the left triceps and depressed left biceps and triceps. A request for Norco refill was made.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg 1 by mouth every 4 hours as needed for pain #200: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

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)

Neck and Upper Back (Acute and Chronic), Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Opioids, Pain.

Decision rationale: ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for neck and 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. As such, the question for Norco 325/10mg # 200 is not medically necessary.