

Case Number:	CM15-0041132		
Date Assigned:	03/11/2015	Date of Injury:	06/27/2005
Decision Date:	04/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/04/2015

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: Family Practice

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

This 62-year-old male sustained a work related injury on 06/27/2005. According to a progress report dated 11/11/2014, the subjective complaints included constant low back and cervical pain. He also complained of decreased sleep secondary to low back pain. Medication regimen included Anaprox, Norco, Prilosec and Lyrica. Surgical history included lumbar discectomy at L4-5 in 2006 and posterior lumbar interbody fusion at L4-5, L3-4 and L4-5 laminectomy and discectomy with pedicle screws and rods at L3, L4 and L5 on 12/07/2010, followed by 10 visits of physical therapy. He then suffered an injury to his cervical spine. On 11/27/2012, he had a 1 level Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion. Diagnoses included lumbar disc disease, lumbar radiculitis, post laminectomy syndrome and cervical disc disease. The provider noted that the injured worker's condition was unchanged and should continue with the same medications. Somnicin was added to his medication regimen to aid in sleep. According to a progress report dated 01/06/2015, the provider noted that the injured worker condition was unimproved and that he should continue with the same medications. Prescriptions were given for Norco, Lyrica and Anaprox. The injured worker was working.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg, 240 count: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines
Page(s): 80.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids
Page(s): 76-78, 80.

Decision rationale: The MTUS/Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines comment on the long-term use of opioids, including Norco. These guidelines have established criteria on the use of opioids for the ongoing management of pain. Actions should include: prescriptions from a single practitioner and from a single pharmacy. The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. There should be an 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. There should be evidence of documentation of the, "4 'A's for Ongoing Monitoring." These four domains include: pain relief, side effects, physical and psychological functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant drug-related behaviors. Further, there should be consideration of a consultation with a multidisciplinary pain clinic if doses of opioids are required beyond what is usually required for the condition or pain that does not improve on opioids in 3 months. There should be consideration of an addiction medicine consult if there is evidence of substance misuse (Pages 76-78). Finally, the guidelines indicate that for chronic pain, the long-term efficacy of opioids is unclear. Failure to respond to a time-limited course of opioids has led to the suggestion of reassessment and consideration of alternative therapy (Page 80). Based on the review of the medical records, there is insufficient documentation in support of these stated MTUS/Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines for the ongoing use of opioids. There is insufficient documentation of the, "4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring." The treatment course of opioids in this patient has extended well beyond the time frame required for a reassessment of therapy. In summary, there is insufficient documentation to support the chronic use of an opioid in this patient. Continued treatment with Norco is not considered as medically necessary. In the Utilization Review process, a weaning dose of Norco was provided. This is consistent with the above-cited MTUS recommendations on opioids.