

Case Number:	CM15-0050993		
Date Assigned:	03/24/2015	Date of Injury:	05/08/1997
Decision Date:	05/04/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/24/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/17/2015

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: Maryland

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Rheumatology

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 73 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 05/08/97. Initial complaints and diagnoses are not available. Treatments to date include medications and a TENS unit. Diagnostic studies include a MRI of the lumbar spine. Current complaints include lower backache. In a progress note dated 02/10/15 the treating provider reports the plan of care as low back brace, and continued Norco, Flexeril, Ambien, and Celebrex. Consideration for an intrathecal pain pump is also mentioned. The requested treatment is Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #90 with 1 refill: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation California MTUS Opioids, Criteria for use Therapeutic Trial of Opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use Page(s): 76-85, 88-89.

Decision rationale: This 73 year old female has complained of low back pain since date of injury 5/8/97. She has been treated with TENS, physical therapy and medications to include opioids since at least 12/2014. The current request is for Norco. No treating physician reports adequately assess the patient with respect to function, specific benefit, return to work, signs of abuse or treatment alternatives other than opioids. There is no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids according to the MTUS section cited above which recommends prescribing according to function, with specific functional goals, return to work, random drug testing, opioid contract and documentation of failure of prior non-opioid therapy. On the basis of this lack of documentation and failure to adhere to the MTUS guidelines, Norco is not medically necessary.