

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0059796		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/06/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	01/13/2009
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/06/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	03/11/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	03/30/2015

### 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, Illinois

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:

This 52 year old male sustained an industrial injury to the neck and shoulder on 1/13/00. Previous treatment included magnetic resonance imaging, cervical spine fusion, electromyography, epidural steroid injections, physical therapy and medications. In a PR-2 dated 2/24/15, the injured worker complained of continuing neck pain rated 8/10 on the visual analog scale with radiation into the upper extremities, associated with numbness and weakness. The injured worker reported that a recent epidural steroid injection (12/13/14) initially improved his symptoms by over 60% but the pain returned by the time of exam. Current diagnoses included cervical spine radiculopathy, status post two level cervical spine surgery and intervertebral disc disorder. The treatment plan included a prescription of Norco with five refills to prevent a gap in treatment.

### 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 5 refills:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, On-Going Management, Weaning of Medications.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids  
Page(s): 78-81.

**Decision rationale:** The injured worker sustained a work related injury on 1/13/00. The medical records provided indicate the diagnosis of cervical spine radiculopathy, status post two level cervical spine surgery and intervertebral disc disorder. Treatments have included cervical spine fusion, epidural steroid injections, physical therapy, and medications. The medical records provided for review do not indicate a medical necessity for Norco 10/325mg #90 with 5 refills. The MTUS recommends the use of the lowest dose of opioids for the short term treatment of moderate to severe pain. The MTUS does not recommend the use of opioids for longer than 70 days in the treatment of chronic pain due to worsening adverse effects and lack of research in support of benefit. Also, the MTUS recommends that individuals on opioid maintenance treatment be monitored for analgesia (pain control), activities of daily living, adverse effects and aberrant behavior; the MTUS recommends discontinuation of opioid treatment if there is no documented evidence of overall improvement or if there is evidence of illegal activity or drug abuse or adverse effect with the opioid medication. The records indicate he has been using this medication for more than six months with no overall improvement in pain and function. The records indicate the injured worker is not well monitored for pain control, activities of daily living and aberrant behavior. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.