

Case Number:	CM15-0086229		
Date Assigned:	05/08/2015	Date of Injury:	08/03/2006
Decision Date:	06/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/16/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/05/2015

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: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 66 year old female who sustained a work related injury August 3, 2006. Past history includes gastric bypass surgery. According to an interval physician's progress report, dated January 7, 2015, the injured worker presented with continuing back pain, rated 9/10 without medication and 3/10 with medication. She reports a few flares of sciatica over the last three months, otherwise no changes in her symptoms. Current medications include gabapentin three times a day, Norco 10mg no more than six a day, Flexeril 2mg at night, and Ultram 2-3 times a day, usually in the day time hours. Physical examination reveals the injured worker morbidly obese and using a walker for ambulation. She is tender in the left paraspinal region at the apex of the scoliotic deformity. Her active range of motion is guarded in all directions with complaints of back stiffness. Assessment is documented as moderate scoliosis, lumbar spine with multilevel moderate to severe degenerative disc disease, multilevel disc protrusions, with multilevel foraminal stenosis; morbid obesity and severe osteoporosis; chronic pain with narcotic physiological tolerance. At issue, is the request for authorization for Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 #180 (max 6/day) with 2 refills: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use Page(s): 78, 79-80.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page 74-96.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The Norco 10/325 #180 (max 6/day) with 2 refills is not medically necessary and appropriate.