

Case Number:	CM14-0153046		
Date Assigned:	09/23/2014	Date of Injury:	07/08/2003
Decision Date:	10/28/2014	UR Denial Date:	08/20/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/19/2014

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and is licensed to practice in California. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

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

According to the records made available for review, this is a 51-year-old male with a 7/8/03 date of injury, status post anterior L5-S1 fusion 7/23/04, status post spinal fusion 3/22/05, status post right carpal tunnel release 11/9/05, and status post left carpal tunnel release 7/13/06. At the time (8/8/14) of request for authorization for Norco 10/325 #180, there is documentation of subjective (pain described as stabbing in the low back, aching in the buttocks, burning in the posterior left lower extremity, and numbness in left hip and groin) and objective (sacroiliac joints tender, tenderness over the paraspinals, decreased range of motion due to increased pain, and straight leg raise positive on left) findings, current diagnoses (postlaminectomy syndrome of the lumbar region, lumbar degenerative disc disease, lumbar radiculitis, low back pain, and chronic pain syndrome), and treatment to date (medications (including ongoing treatment with Norco, Naproxen, Omeprazole with increased function and activities of daily living with medications) and physical therapy). Discussion indicates there is a signed opioid agreement on file.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 #180: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-80. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Other Medical Treatment Guideline or Medical Evidence: Title 8, California Code of Regulations, section 9792.20

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines necessitate documentation that the prescriptions are from a single practitioner and are taken as directed; the lowest possible dose is being prescribed; and there will be ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects, as criteria necessary to support the medical necessity of opioids. MTUS-Definitions identifies that any treatment intervention should not be continued in the absence of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services. Within the medical information available for review, there is documentation of diagnoses of postlaminectomy syndrome of the lumbar region, lumbar degenerative disc disease, lumbar radiculitis, low back pain, and chronic pain syndrome. In addition, given documentation of a signed opioid agreement, there is documentation that the prescriptions are from a single practitioner and are taken as directed; the lowest possible dose is being prescribed; there will be ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Furthermore, given documentation of ongoing treatment with Norco with increased function and activities of daily living, there is documentation of functional benefit and improvement as an increase in activity tolerance as a result of Norco use to date. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for Norco 10/325 #180 is medically necessary.