

Case Number:	CM15-0011286		
Date Assigned:	01/29/2015	Date of Injury:	06/12/2002
Decision Date:	03/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/26/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/20/2015

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, District of Columbia, Maryland
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

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 52 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 6/12/02. She has reported back injury. The diagnoses have included status post spinal fusion at L5-S1 with chronic back pain, muscle spasms, radicular symptoms and grade 2 spondylolisthesis defect; anxiety and depressive disorder and obesity. Treatment to date has included lumbar spinal fusion and oral medications. Currently, the injured worker complains of sharp, stabbing pain in left back with radiation to left hip with heavy, numb sensation. The injured worker states her pain is lessened with medications. On 12/26/14 Utilization Review non-certified Norco 10/325 mg #140, noting the indications for Norco are for short term use, continuing Norco is not medically indicated at this time. The MTUS, ACOEM Guidelines, was cited. On 1/10/15, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of Norco 10/325 mg #140.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #140: Upheld

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): 78, 91.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding ongoing management of opioids "Four domains have been proposed as most relevant for ongoing monitoring of chronic pain patients on opioids: Pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant (or nonadherent) drug related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the '4 A's' (Analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and any aberrant drug-taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs." Review of the available medical records reveals no documentation to support the medical necessity of norco nor any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains, which is a recommended practice for the on-going management of opioids. Specifically, the notes do not appropriately review and document pain relief, functional status improvement, appropriate medication use, or side effects. The MTUS considers this list of criteria for initiation and continuation of opioids in the context of efficacy required to substantiate medical necessity, and they do not appear to have been addressed by the treating physician in the documentation available for review. Furthermore, efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. It was noted that urine drug screens were appropriate, however, records were not available for review. As MTUS recommends to discontinue opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.