

Case Number:	CM15-0012190		
Date Assigned:	01/29/2015	Date of Injury:	01/24/2012
Decision Date:	03/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/21/2015

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: North Carolina, Georgia
Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 was a 52 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury, January 24, 2012. The injured worker was diagnosed with chronic neck and right upper extremity pain, posterior disc protrusion, at C3-C4 and broad-based disk osteophyte complex to C5-C6 with bilateral foraminal stenosis and mild central stenosis, right radicular symptoms of the neck, persistent right thumb, wrist, hand symptoms, and left6 upper extremity pain possibly due to overcompensation, right wrist with degenerative changes and right hand with osteoarthritis changes. The injured worker previously received the following treatments Norco 4 times a day; random urine drug screening, MRI cervical spine, acupuncture and electromyography of the right upper extremity was normal. According to progress note of December 18, 2014, the injured workers chief complaint was ongoing neck and right upper extremity pain. The injured worker continues to do well on the current medication regiment with no adverse side effects or aberrant behaviors. On December 18, 2014, the primary treating physician requested a prescription for Norco 10/325mg #240 for neck and right upper extremity pain. January 10, 2015, the utilization review denied authorization for a prescription for Norco 10/325mg #240. The utilization Reviewer referenced MTUS and ODG guidelines for the decision.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg tabs #240: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Section 2 Page(s): 74-89.

Decision rationale: CA MTUS allows for the use of opioid medication, such as Norco, for the management of chronic pain and outlines clearly the documentation that would support the need for ongoing use of an opioid. These steps include documenting pain and functional improvement using validated measures at 6 months intervals, documenting the presence or absence of any adverse effects, documenting the efficacy of any other treatments and of any other medications used in pain treatment. Urine drug screening should be used to assess compliance with prescribed medications. In this case, the medical records state that urine drug screens have been consistent with prescribed medication yet the included urine drug screen from 6/19/2014 contains no metabolites of Norco and is clearly reported as inconsistent with prescribed medication use. The medical records do not address this inconsistency, which indicates a high likelihood for diversion of medication. Therefore, the record does not support medical necessity of ongoing opioid therapy with Norco.