

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0111527		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	06/18/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/04/2009
<b>Decision Date:</b>	07/22/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	05/11/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	06/09/2015

### 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, New York, California  
 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:

The applicant is a represented 63-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic neck, shoulder, and wrist pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of March 4, 2009. In a Utilization Review report dated May 11, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. The claims administrator referenced a RFA form dated May 2, 2015 and a progress note dated January 27, 2015 in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On April 30, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of neck and shoulder pain, 9/10. The applicant was described as having "disabling symptoms". The applicant had undergone earlier failed shoulder surgery, it was stated. The applicant was obese, with a BMI of 36, it was acknowledged. The applicant was unemployed, it was reported. The applicant's medication list reported included Flomax, losartan, Lipitor, and metformin, it was stated. MRI imaging of the cervical spine, physical therapy, a traction device, and cervical collar were all sought, along with a TENS unit. In a March 12, 2015 progress note, it was stated that the applicant had retired. An orthopedic evaluation for the shoulder and electrodiagnostic testing of the bilateral upper extremities were proposed. 6-8/10 neck, shoulder, and wrist pain complaints were noted, frequent to constant and severe, it was acknowledged. The treating provider stated that the applicant's medications were beneficial but did not explicitly state what medication or medications the applicant was using on this date. On January 27, 2015, ninety tablets of Norco were renewed. 8/10, "frequent, severe" pain complaints about the right wrist, left wrist, right shoulder, and neck were reported. Repetitive motion remained problematic, the treating provider reported.

## IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325 every 6 hours as needed #90:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 91.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 7) When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

**Decision rationale:** No, the request for Norco, a short-acting opioid, is not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. As noted on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the cardinal criteria for continuation of opioid therapy include evidence of successful return to work, improved functioning, and/or reduced pain achieved as a result of the same. Here, however, the applicant was no longer working, it was reported on multiple progress notes, referenced above, it was suggested that the applicant had retired. The applicant also reported complaints of frequent and severe pain on January 27, 2015, as high as 8/10. On April 30, 2015, the applicant stated that his pain complaints were "disabling". The applicant was lying in bed secondary to pain, it was noted on April 30, 2015. It did not appear, in short, that the applicant had profited with ongoing Norco usage. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.