

Case Number:	CM15-0122542		
Date Assigned:	07/06/2015	Date of Injury:	05/08/2013
Decision Date:	09/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/25/2015

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: New York
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Emergency 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 injured worker is a 58 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on May 8, 2013 while working as a cashier. The injured worker bent over to remove an empty box from below the register and experienced low back pain. The diagnoses have included chronic low back pain, lumbar disc herniation, lumbar spondylosis without myelopathy, bilateral tarsal tunnel syndrome, lumbosacral radiculitis, lumbar degenerative disc disease and lumbosacral radiculopathy. Treatment and evaluation to date has included medications, radiological studies, MRI, electrodiagnostic studies, chiropractic treatments, physical therapy and a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit. The injured workers work status was noted to be permanent and stationary with modified restrictions. Current documentation dated May 21, 2015 notes that the injured worker reported little change in her symptoms. The injured worker noted back pain and left lower extremity pain. The pain was characterized as achy. Examination revealed bilateral lumbosacral paraspinous tenderness and pain with extension of the lower back. A straight leg raise test was positive bilaterally. Medications included Norco which the injured worker was noted to take occasionally. The treating physician's plan of care included a request for Norco 10/325 mg 1 tablet 3 times a day as needed for 30 days # 60.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg tablet, 1 tablet three times a day as needed for 30 days, #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Ongoing management, opioids Page(s): 76-77.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 80-81, 86.

Decision rationale: The California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS) Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines discourages long term usage unless there is evidence of ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status and appropriate medication use and side effects. "Pain assessment should include: current pain, the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, average pain, the intensity of pain after taking the opioid, how long it takes for pain relief and how long the pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the injured worker's decreased pain level, increased level of function or improved quality of life." Norco has been prescribed for this injured worker for three months, since March 2015. No functional improvement as a result of use of Norco was noted. The documentation shows no change in work restrictions for this injured worker with use of Norco. There was no documentation of improvement in specific activities of daily living as a result of use of Norco. There was no documentation of decrease in medication use or decrease in frequency of office visits as a result of use of Norco. Due to lack of detailed pain assessment, lack of documentation of improvement in pain and lack of documentation of functional improvement, the request for Norco is not medically necessary.