

Case Number:	CM15-0025680		
Date Assigned:	02/18/2015	Date of Injury:	09/23/2013
Decision Date:	04/02/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/05/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/10/2015

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 61 year old male, who sustained a work related injury on 9/23/13. The diagnoses have included depression, arthritis, lumbosacral disc degeneration and post lumbar laminectomy syndrome. Treatments to date have included oral medications including Norco, 24 post-operative physical therapy sessions, lumbar surgery x 3, acupuncture, ice/heat, epidural steroid injection, MRI, CT scans and activity modifications. In the PR-2 dated 1/27/15, the injured worker complains of lumbar and left ankle pain. He rates this pain a 3-4/10. He complains of the left ankle pain as intermittent sharp, stabbing pain and weakness. He states he is getting 70-80% pain control on medications. He states that pushing and pulling make low back pain worse. He is having interrupted sleep due to the pain. He states he is having spasms in low back. He has tenderness to palpation of low back. On 2/5/15, Utilization Review non-certified a request for Norco 10/325mg., #90. The California MTUS, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines, were cited.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use Page(s): 78-80, 91, 124.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opiates
Page(s): 69, 73.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding on-going 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 does not document information to support the medical necessity of Norco complete 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 document 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. There is no documentation comprehensively addressing this concern in the records available for my review. As MTUS recommends to discontinue opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.