

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0028331		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	02/20/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/03/1998
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/03/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	01/23/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/16/2015

### 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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & General Preventive 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 male, with a reported date of injury of 01/23/2015. The diagnoses include chronic pain syndrome, lumbar spine pain, lumbar radiculopathy, lumbar spine degenerative disc disease, and opioid dependence. Treatments have included oral medications, and a cane. The progress report dated 12/26/2014 indicates that the injured worker had pain in his head, bilateral arms, bilateral legs, neck, bilateral shoulders, bilateral buttocks, thoracic spine, bilateral elbows, bilateral hips, bilateral hands, bilateral knees, abdomen, bilateral low back, bilateral ankles/feet, and groin. There was no change in pain control since the last visit. Without medications, the injured worker's pain was rated 10 out of 10. The injured worker can tolerate a pain level of 6 out of 10. The physical examination showed no scoliosis of the thoracic or lumbar spine; lumbar spine tenderness to palpation; decreased range of motion of the torso; an antalgic gait; use of cane; positive bilateral leg radicular symptoms; and positive bilateral straight leg raise test. The treating physician requested Norco 10/325mg #120, 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hours as needed. The rationale for the request was not indicated. On 01/23/2015, Utilization Review (UR) modified the request for Norco 10/325mg #120, 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hours as needed. The UR physician noted that no diagnostic studies were provided for review and the treating physician's treatment plan was to refill medications. The MTUS Chronic Pain Guidelines were cited.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325 mg, 120 count:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 24, 63 - 69, 78 - 86 and 100.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-96. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck and Upper Back (Acute and Chronic), Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Shoulder, Pain, Opioids.

**Decision rationale:** ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for neck, low back, and shoulder pain "except for short use for severe cases, not to exceed 2 weeks." The patient has exceeded the 2 week recommended treatment length for opioid usage. MTUS does not discourage use of opioids past 2 weeks, but does state that "ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life." The treating physician does not fully document the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, intensity of pain after taking opioid, pain relief, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Additionally, medical documents indicate that the patient has been on Norco in excess of the recommended 2-week limit. As such, the request for Norco 10/325 mg, 120 count is not medically necessary.