

Case Number:	CM15-0066242		
Date Assigned:	04/14/2015	Date of Injury:	08/11/2011
Decision Date:	05/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/12/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/07/2015

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 36-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic low back and groin pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of August 11, 2011. In a Utilization Review report dated March 12, 2015, the claims administrator partially approved a request for Norco, apparently for weaning or tapering purposes. A March 5, 2015 progress note was referenced in the determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On November 7, 2014, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back and groin pain status post multiple hernia repair procedures. The applicant was on Percocet thrice daily, it was incidentally noted. The applicant had apparently recently transitioned from Norco to Percocet on the grounds that Norco had not provided lasting relief. The attending provider then stated, in another section of the note, that the applicant was going to transition back to Norco. Lyrica and Flexeril were also endorsed. The applicant's work status was not explicitly stated, although it appeared that the attending provider suggested that the applicant continue permanent limitations previously imposed by a medical-legal evaluator. The applicant reported difficulty sleeping secondary to pain. On December 2, 2014, the applicant again reported ongoing complaints of low back pain radiating to the groin, aching and burning, 4/10 pain with medications versus 9/10 pain without medications was noted. The applicant maintained that her ability to perform self-care, personal hygiene, and cooking had reportedly been heightened as a result of ongoing medication consumption. Norco was dispensed. Permanent limitations imposed by a medical-legal evaluator were seemingly renewed, although it did not appear that the applicant was working with said limitations in place.

The applicant stated that certain activities of daily living, however, such as prolonged walking, prolonged standing, bending, and lifting remained problematic.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 prescription of Norco 10/325mg #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, specific drug list, Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen; Opioids, weaning of medications.

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, was 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 seemingly off work as of a December 2, 2014 progress note on which Norco was renewed. While the attending provider stated that the applicant's pain scores had been reduced as a result of ongoing medication consumption, this was, however, outweighed by the applicant's seeming failure to return to work and the applicant's continued reports of difficulty performing activities of daily living as basic as standing, walking, sitting, bending, and lifting, despite ongoing Norco usage. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.