

Case Number:	CM15-0067991		
Date Assigned:	04/15/2015	Date of Injury:	12/10/2009
Decision Date:	05/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/27/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/09/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, 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:

This 64 year old male sustained an industrial injury to the back on 12/10/09. Previous treatment included magnetic resonance imaging, lumbar laminectomy, physical therapy and medications. In a PR-2 dated 3/12/15 complained of ongoing right lower extremity radiating symptoms with shooting pains, numbness and tingling. The physician noted no significant changes on physical exam. Current diagnoses included status post L4-S1 facetectomy, laminectomy and foraminotomy, lumbar spine herniated disc and lumbar spine degenerative disc disease with stenosis and annular tears. The treatment plan included a refill of Norco and Motrin.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #150 (dispensed 3/12/15): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 76-80.

Decision rationale: With regard to this request, the California Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state the following about on-going management with 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 non-adherent) drug-related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the '4 A's' (analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and 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." Guidelines further recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improvement in function and reduction in pain. In the progress reports available for review, the requesting provider did not adequately document monitoring of the four domains. There did not appear to be adequate monitoring for aberrant behaviors such as querying the CURES database, risk stratifying patients using metrics such as ORT or SOAPP, or including results of random urine toxicology testing. Although there is the statement that the patient has no aberrant behaviors in several notes, there is notation in a progress note from March 2015 that the patient had drunk beer before but is no longer doing so. Based on the lack of documentation, medical necessity of this request cannot be established at this time. Although this opioid is not medically necessary at this time, it should not be abruptly halted, and the requesting provider should start a weaning schedule as he or she sees fit or supply the requisite monitoring documentation to continue this medication.