

Case Number:	CM15-0091596		
Date Assigned:	05/18/2015	Date of Injury:	11/19/2007
Decision Date:	06/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/12/2015

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

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 51 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 11/19/2007. She reported lifting a case of canned vegetables off a shelf, with it slipping out of her hands, landing on her right foot and ankle. The injured worker was diagnosed as having chronic reflex sympathetic dystrophy of the right lower extremity, status post tarsal tunnel release to the right foot in 7/2010 and aseptic necrosis of the talus. Treatment to date has included diagnostics, surgical intervention, physical therapy, and medications. The use of Norco was noted since at least 2008. Currently, the injured worker complains of pain in her right lower extremity, rated 5/10 with medications, and 9/10 without. The use of Norco was documented to help with activities of daily living and have improved sleep (Ambien also noted). The medication took about 30 minutes to take effect and lasted 4 hours. Current medications included Norco (four per day), Relafen, Ambien, and Lyrica. Urine drug screen (12/03/2014) was documented as consistent. Objective findings included her appearing in mild distress, ambulation with a limp favoring the right leg, and significant swelling over the right ankle. The treatment plan included continued medications. Her work status was permanent and stationary.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg Qty 120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-95, 124.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page(s) 74-96.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The Norco 10/325 mg Qty 120 is not medically necessary and appropriate.