

Case Number:	CM15-0096372		
Date Assigned:	05/26/2015	Date of Injury:	01/05/2012
Decision Date:	07/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/14/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/19/2015

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: 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 injured worker is a male, who sustained an industrial injury on 1/5/2012. He reported low back pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having chronic persistent low back pain. Treatment to date has included medications, magnetic resonance imaging. The request is for Norco. On 4/7/2015, he complained of low back pain with radiation to the right lower extremity. He rated the pain as 8/10 that goes down to 6/10 with the use of Norco. On 5/5/2015, he complained of chronic low back pain. He rated the pain as 8/10 without medications and down to 5/10 with medications. He indicated Norco provided him with 4-5 hours of relief, and allowed him to be more active. Physical examination revealed tenderness of the lumbar spine area, slow rise from seated position and mild abnormal gait for first few steps.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg #150 (5 a day): Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioid Section Weaning of Medications Section Page(s): 74-95, 124.

Decision rationale: The MTUS Guidelines do not recommend the use of opioid pain medications, in general, for the management of chronic pain. There is guidance for the rare instance where opioids are needed in maintenance therapy, but the emphasis should remain on non-opioid pain medications and active therapy. Long-term use may be appropriate if the patient is showing measurable functional improvement and reduction in pain in the absence of non-compliance. Functional improvement is defined by either significant improvement in activities of daily living or a reduction in work restriction as measured during the history and physical exam. The injured worker has been taking Norco for an extended period without objective documentation of functional improvement or significant decrease in pain. It is not recommended to discontinue opioid treatment abruptly, as weaning of medications is necessary to avoid withdrawal symptoms when opioids have been used chronically. This request however is not for a weaning treatment, but to continue treatment. The request for Norco 10/325 mg #150 (5 a day) is determined to not be medically necessary.