

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Case Number: | CM15-0098773 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 06/01/2015 | Date of Injury: | 11/26/2013 |
| Decision Date: | 07/02/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 04/27/2015 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 05/21/2015 |

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 52 year old who has filed a claim for chronic neck, shoulder, arm, hand, and low back pain with derivative complaints of insomnia reportedly associated with an industrial motor vehicle accident (MVA) dated November 26, 2013. In a Utilization Review report dated April 27, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. The claims administrator referenced progress notes dated March 25, 2015 and April 22, 2015 in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On December 10, 2014, the applicant was placed off of work, on total temporary disability, owing to multifocal complaints of neck, mid back, and low back pain with associated upper and lower extremity paresthesias. The applicant was asked to continue unspecified medications without any seeming discussion of medication efficacy. In a January 21, 2015 progress note, difficult to follow, not entirely legible, the applicant reported multifocal complaints of neck, low back, mid back, and bilateral shoulder pain with associated bilateral upper and bilateral lower extremity paresthesias. The applicant was again placed off of work, on total temporary disability, while Naprosyn and Neurontin were continued. Norco was apparently introduced. On February 18, 2015, the applicant was again placed off of work, on total temporary disability, owing to multifocal pain complaints as high as 8/10. Once again, no discussion of medication efficacy transpired. On March 25, 2015, the applicant was again placed off of work, on total temporary disability, while Norco, Naprosyn, and Neurontin were renewed.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 05/325 mg #60: 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 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 off of work, on total temporary disability, it was acknowledged on multiple handwritten progress notes of early 2015, referenced above. The attending provider failed to outline meaningful or material improvements in function or quantifiable decrements in pain (if any) effected as a result of ongoing Norco usage in his handwritten 2015 progress note, referenced above. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.