

Case Number:	CM13-0028499		
Date Assigned:	11/27/2013	Date of Injury:	06/24/1998
Decision Date:	04/21/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/17/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/24/2013

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Neurology, and is licensed to practice in California. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

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 patient a 74 year old man who sustained a work related injury on June 24 1998. Subsequently, he developed chronic neck and back pain. The patient has a history of anterior discectomy, left carpal tunnel release and left trigger thumb release. The patient was treated with pain medications, physical therapy injections, trigger point injections and topical analgesics. According to a note dated on July 22 2013, the patient continued to have a chronic back pain. His physical examination demonstrated tenderness with reduced range of motion of the lumbar spine. The provider requested authorization to use Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

NORCO 10/325MG #180: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 80.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 179.

Decision rationale: According to the MTUS Chronic Pain Guidelines, Norco (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) is a synthetic opioid indicated for the pain management but not recommended as a first line oral analgesic. In addition and according to the MTUS Chronic Pain

Guidelines, ongoing use of opioids should follow specific rules: "Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Information from family members or other caregivers should be considered in determining the patient's response to treatment. The 4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring: 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." In the medical records provided for review, there is no clear evidence of objective and recent functional and pain improvement with previous use of opioids (Norco). There no clear documentation of the efficacy/safety of previous use of Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen. There is no clear justification for the need to continue the use of Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325 mg #180 is not medically necessary and appropriate.