

Case Number:	CM13-0046764		
Date Assigned:	12/27/2013	Date of Injury:	02/26/2010
Decision Date:	03/07/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/23/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/01/2013

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to a physician reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The physician reviewer is Board Certified in Emergency Medicine and is licensed to practice in New York and Texas. 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 physician 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 is a 33 year old female who was injured on February 25, 2010. The patient continued to experience pain and numbness in both hands. Diagnoses included bilateral cubital tunnel syndrome, recurrent ulnar neuropathy, and bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. Treatments included medications, acupuncture, physical therapy, and surgical intervention. Requests for authorization for Norco #180 and Biotherm topical cream were submitted on October 3, 2013.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco (Hydrocodone/APAP/325mg) QTY 180 1-2 tablets: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 81.

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

Decision rationale: Norco is the compounded medication containing hydrocodone and acetaminophen. Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that opioids are not recommended as a first line therapy. Opioid should be part of a treatment plan specific for the patient and should follow criteria for use. Criteria for use include establishment of a treatment plan, determination if pain is nociceptive or neuropathic, failure of pain relief with non-opioid

analgesics, setting of specific functional goals, and opioid contract with agreement for random drug testing. If analgesia is not obtained, opioids should be discontinued. The patient should be screened for likelihood that he or she could be weaned from the opioids if there is no improvement in pain of function. It is recommended for short term use if first-line options, such as acetaminophen or NSAIDS have failed. In this case the patient had been prescribed opioids since at least October of 2012 with very little relief of pain. Analgesia had not been obtained. There is no documentation of a signed opioid contract or urine drug screening. Criteria for use have not been met.

Biotherm Topical Cream (Capsaicin 0.02%) 4oz- apply 2-3 times: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 11-112..

Decision rationale: Biotherm is the topical drug capsaicin. Topical analgesics are recommended for neuropathic pain when anticonvulsants and antidepressants have failed. Capsaicin is recommended only as an option in patients who have not responded or cannot tolerate other treatments. It is recommended for osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, and chronic non-specific back pain and is considered experimental in high doses. In this case there is no documentation that the patient had failed a trial of antidepressants or anticonvulsants. The patient was not diagnosed with osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, or chronic back pain. Medical necessity is not established.