

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0129456		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	08/20/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/01/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/10/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	07/26/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/14/2014

### 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, has a subspecialty in Neuromuscular Medicine and is licensed to practice in New Jersey. 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 is a 58-year-old man who sustained a work-related injury on the November 1, 2011. Subsequently, the patient developed with chronic left with pain. The according to a progress report dated on January 23, 2014, the patient was complaining of constant pain severity is rated 4/10-9/10. The patient was also complaining of stress, anxiety and balance problems. The patient physical examination demonstrated collapse the medial arch, a misalignment of the talocalcaneal joint and pain over the tarsal tunnel from traction and from the stability of the ankle. According to another progress report dated on June 10, 2014, the patient condition did not improve. The patient physical examination demonstrated lumbar tenderness with reduced range of motion and reduced sensation in the left foot. There is tenderness in the left ankle with joint effusion. The patient was diagnosed with lumbar radiculopathy and left ankle joint derangement as well as anxiety the provider request authorization for the use of Norco.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325 mg #60 with 2 refills:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 3 Initial Approaches to Treatment Page(s): 47-48, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines: Pain Chapter, Opioids for chronic pain

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for use of opioids Page(s): 76-79.

**Decision rationale:** According to MTUS 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 MTUS guidelines, ongoing use of opioids should follow specific rules: < (a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed, and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy.(b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function.(c) Office: Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. 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>According to the patient file, there is no objective documentation of pain and functional improvement to justify continuous use of Norco. Norco was used for longtime without documentation of functional improvement or evidence of improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10-325mg #60 with 2 refills is not medically necessary.