

Case Number:	CM14-0166926		
Date Assigned:	10/14/2014	Date of Injury:	09/19/2002
Decision Date:	11/17/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/11/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/09/2014

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 Occupational Medicine and is licensed to practice in Hawaii. 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:

This case is a male employee with a date of injury on 9/19/2002. A review of the medical records indicates that the patient is undergoing treatment for chronic low back pain. Treatment notes (8/2/2014), patient noted low back, leg, and neck pain without pain rating. Subjective complaints (8/26/2014) include low back pain rated at 7-9/10, left leg pain rated at 7/10, and neck pain rated at 7/10. Objective findings 6/10/2014 and 8/5/2014 include decrease range of motion of lumbar spine, tenderness to palpation of paraspinal muscles. No physical exam findings noted on 8/26/2014. Treatment has included trigger point injections, psychotherapy, and Hydrocodone (as early as 2003). A utilization review dated 9/10/2014 non-certified a request for Norco 5/325mg #60 due to lack of improvement on opioids.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 5/325mg #60: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-96. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain, Opioids

Decision rationale: ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for neck and low back pain "except for short use for severe cases, not to exceed 2 weeks." The patient has exceeded the 2 week recommended treatment length for opioid usage. MTUS does not discourage use of opioids past 2 weeks, but does state that "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." The treating physician does not fully document the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, intensity of pain after taking opioid, pain relief, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Additionally, medical documents indicate that the patient has been on an opioid since 2003, in excess of the recommended 2-week limit. The treating physician does not detail sufficient information to substantiate the need for continued opioid medication. Therefore the request for Norco 325/10mg is not medically necessary.