

Case Number:	CM14-0175922		
Date Assigned:	10/29/2014	Date of Injury:	05/26/2011
Decision Date:	12/24/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/10/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/23/2014

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 Family Medicine 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:

This is a 43 year old male patient who sustained a work related injury on 5/26/11. The patient sustained the injury when he was stepping off of a truck into a pothole in 2006 while working road construction in the dark and injured his ankle. The current diagnoses include knee pain and status post open right knee surgery. Per the doctor's note dated 9/4/2014, the patient has complaints of right knee pain. A physical examination of the right knee revealed slowed gait and was assisted by crutches, range of motion was restricted with flexion limited to 130 degrees, limited by pain and normal extension, no joint effusion, negative Ballotable patella sign and Wadell's sign. The current medication list includes Norco and Lorazepam. The patient has had MRI of the right knee that revealed meniscus tears. Diagnostic imaging reports were not specified in the records provided. The patient's surgical history includes open right knee surgery on 12/23/2013. Any operative/ or procedure note was not specified in the records provided. He has had a urine drug toxicology report on 3/6/11 and 9/30/10 that was consistent. Other therapy done for this injury was not specified in the records provided.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 88.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use; Criteria for Use of Opioids; Therapeutic Trial of Opioids Page(s):.

Decision rationale: Norco 10/325 is an opioid analgesic. According to CA MTUS guidelines cited below, "A therapeutic trial of opioids should not be employed until the patient has failed a trial of non-opioid analgesics. Before initiating therapy, the patient should set goals, and the continued use of opioids should be contingent on meeting these goals." The records provided do not specify that patient has set goals regarding the use of opioid analgesic. A treatment failure with non-opioid analgesics is not specified in the records provided. Other criteria for ongoing management of opioids are: "The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. There is ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and their side effects. Consider the use of a urine drug screen to assess for the use or the presence of illegal drugs." The records provided do not provide a documentation of response in regards to pain control and functional improvement to opioid analgesic for this patient. The continued review of overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control is not documented in the records provided. As recommended by MTUS a documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects should be maintained for ongoing management of opioid analgesic, these are not specified in the records provided. Whether improvement in pain translated into objective functional improvement including ability to work is not specified in the records provided. With this, it is deemed that, this patient does not meet criteria for ongoing continued use of opioids analgesic. The medical necessity of Norco 10/325mg #60is not established for this patient.