

Case Number:	CM14-0077862		
Date Assigned:	07/18/2014	Date of Injury:	08/13/2009
Decision Date:	09/25/2014	UR Denial Date:	04/30/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/28/2014

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 40 year old male who reported an industrial injury to the right lower extremity on 8/13/2009, over five (5) years ago to the right foot reported as a truck rolling over his right foot. The right foot/ankle/ knee were accepted for this industrial injury. The patient continues to complain of right knee, ankle, and foot pain. The patient was noted to be using an ankle brace and reported difficulty walking. The objective findings on examination included tenderness along the anterior ankle medially and laterally; right knee range of motion was 0-125; knee was stable; positive McMurray testing; right ankle with edema; moderate effusion; tenderness to palpation over the peroneal tendons and posterior tibial tendon; tenderness to palpation over the anterior talofibular ligament. The patient was being treated for the diagnoses of status post right knee arthroscopic the with meniscectomy and chondroplasty on 3/1/2012 and status post right ankle crush injury. The patient was treated with medications, CAM boot, crutches, physical therapy, and surgical intervention. The patient was assessed as permanent and stationary. The patient was continued treatment with the recommendations for future medical care which included PT, medications, injections, and no surgical procedures. The treatment plan included MRIs of the right knee and right ankle along with Norco 10/325 mg #150.

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 ACOEM Chapter 14 Ankle and Foot Complaints Page(s): 372, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines NSAIDS, Opioids Page(s): 68, 24. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines-Treatment Index- Ankle and Foot Chapter.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines opioids Page(s): 74-97. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) pain chapter-opioids.

Decision rationale: The prescription for Hydrocodone-APAP (Norco) 7.5/325 mg #90 for short acting pain is being prescribed as an opioid analgesic for the treatment of chronic pain to the knee, ankle, and foot for the date of injury over 5 years ago. The objective findings on examination do not support the medical necessity for continued opioid analgesics. The patient is being prescribed opioids for bilateral wrist pain, which is inconsistent with the recommendations of the CA MTUS. There is no objective evidence provided to support the continued prescription of opioid analgesics for the cited diagnoses and effects of the industrial claim. The patient should be titrated down and off the prescribed Hydrocodone. The patient is 5 years s/p DOI with reported continued issues. There is no demonstrated medical necessity for the continuation of opioids for the effects of the industrial injury. The chronic use of Hydrocodone-APAP/Norco is not recommended by the CA MTUS; the ACOEM Guidelines or the Official Disability Guidelines for the long term treatment of chronic lower extremity pain. The prescription of opiates on a continued long-term basis is inconsistent with the CA MTUS and the Official Disability Guidelines recommendations for the use of opiate medications for the treatment of chronic pain. There is objective evidence that supports the use of opioid analgesics in the treatment of this patient over the use of NSAIDs for the treatment of chronic pain. The current prescription of opioid analgesics is inconsistent with evidence-based guidelines. The prescription of opiates on a continued long-term basis is inconsistent with the Official Disability Guidelines recommendations for the use of opiate medications for the treatment of chronic pain. There is objective evidence that supports the use of opioid analgesics in the treatment of this patient over the use of NSAIDs for the treatment of chronic pain issues. Evidence-based guidelines necessitate documentation that the patient has signed an appropriate pain contract, functional expectations have been agreed to by the clinician, and the patient, pain medications will be provided by one physician only, and the patient agrees to use only those medications recommended or agreed to by the clinician to support the medical necessity of treatment with opioids. The ACOEM Guidelines updated chapter on chronic pain states, "Opiates for the treatment of mechanical and compressive etiologies: rarely beneficial. Chronic pain can have a mixed physiologic etiology of both neuropathic and nociceptive components. In most cases, analgesic treatment should begin with acetaminophen, aspirin, and NSAIDs (as suggested by the WHO step-wise algorithm). When these drugs do not satisfactorily reduce pain, opioids for moderate to moderately severe pain may be added to (not substituted for) the less efficacious drugs. A major concern about the use of opioids for chronic pain is that most randomized controlled trials have been limited to a short-term period (70 days). This leads to a concern about confounding issues; such as, tolerance, opioid-induced hyperalgesia, long-range adverse effects, such as, hypogonadism and/or opioid abuse, and the influence of placebo as a variable for treatment effect." ACOEM guidelines state that opioids appear to be no more effective than safer analgesics for managing most musculoskeletal symptoms; they should be used only if needed for severe pain and only for a

short time. The long-term use of opioid medications may be considered in the treatment of chronic musculoskeletal pain, if: The patient has signed an appropriate pain contract; Functional expectations have been agreed to by the clinician and the patient; Pain medications will be provided by one physician only; The patient agrees to use only those medications recommended or agreed to by the clinician. ACOEM also notes, "Pain medications are typically not useful in the subacute and chronic phases and have been shown to be the most important factor impeding recovery of function." There is no clinical documentation by with objective findings on examination to support the medical necessity of Hydrocodone-APAP for this long period of time or to support ongoing functional improvement. There is no provided evidence that the patient has received benefit or demonstrated functional improvement with the prescribed Hydrocodone-APAP. There is no demonstrated medical necessity for the prescribed Opioids. The continued prescription for Norco 10/325 mg #180 is not demonstrated to be medically necessary.