

Case Number:	CM14-0123340		
Date Assigned:	08/08/2014	Date of Injury:	11/13/2000
Decision Date:	07/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/01/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/05/2014

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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:
 State(s) of Licensure: Texas, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 injured worker is a 64 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 11/13/2000. The mechanism of injury is unknown. The injured worker was status post radiofrequency ablation. There is no record of a recent diagnostic study. Treatment to date has included therapy and medication management. In a progress note dated 7/21/2014, the injured worker complains of chronic low back stiffness and pain and knee pain, rated 2/10, headaches and difficulty sleeping. Physical examination showed lumbosacral tenderness to palpation, normal strength, reflexes, tone and ROM. The treating physician is requesting Norco 10/325 mg #120. The medication list include Cymbalta, ibuprofen, Norco and Prilosec. The patient's surgical history includes left foot and right knee surgery. The patient has had urine drug screen on 9/22/14 that was negative for drug abuse.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg, #120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines -Opioids, criteria for use: page 76-80 Criteria For Use Of Opioids Therapeutic Trial of Opioids.

Decision rationale: Request: Norco 10/325mg, #120 Norco contains Hydrocodone with APAP, which is an opioid analgesic in combination with acetaminophen. 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. Continuing review of the overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control. Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and 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 regard 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. The level of pain control with lower potency opioids and other non-opioid medications, without the use of Norco, was 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, #120 is not established for this patient, given the records submitted and the guidelines referenced. If this medication is discontinued, the medication should be tapered, according to the discretion of the treating provider, to prevent withdrawal symptoms.