

Case Number:	CM14-0205908		
Date Assigned:	12/18/2014	Date of Injury:	04/13/2012
Decision Date:	02/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/05/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/09/2014

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 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 63-year-old man who sustained a work-related injury on April 13, 2012. Subsequently, the patient developed chronic elbow pain. Prior treatments included: medications (Norco and topical preparations), right lateral epicondyle debridement and radial tunnel release, and right ultrasound-guided radial nerve block (with relief). According to the progress report dated October 11, 2014, the patient complained of persistent pain at the right elbow. He had shooting pain down into the right thumb and the dorsum of the right hand. On examination, palpation around the radial tunnel reproduced shooting pain down the right hand. There was some hyperalgesia over the radial nerve distribution. There was tenderness at the dorsal wrist as well. There was slight swelling where the injection was performed. The UDS collected on October 14, 2014 documented consistent findings. The patient was diagnosed with chronic pain syndrome, right wrist ganglion cyst, and right epicondylitis. The provider requested authorization for Norco 10/325 mg, 75 count (#1), Norco 10/325 mg, 75 count (#2), and Norco 10/325 mg, 75 count (#3).

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Refill of Norco 10/325 mg, 75 count (#1): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 78 - 80, 91.

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 return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg (#1) is not medically necessary.

Refill of Norco 10/325 mg, 75 count (#2): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 78 - 80, 91.

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 return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg (#2) is not medically necessary.

Refill of Norco 10/325 mg, 75 count (#3): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 78 - 80, 91.

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 return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg (#3) is not medically necessary.