

Case Number:	CM14-0209884		
Date Assigned:	12/22/2014	Date of Injury:	03/21/2007
Decision Date:	02/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/24/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/15/2014

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 Physical Medicine Rehabilitation, has a subspecialty in Pain Medicine, Spinal Cord Medicine and is licensed to practice in Massachusetts. 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 claimant has a history of work injury occurring on 03/21/07 when she had left shoulder pain while working in a sausage factory. She underwent left shoulder arthroscopy in July 2007 and a revision biceps tenodesis in February 2008. She was seen on 05/15/14. She was having ongoing left shoulder pain with numbness and tingling and intermittent pain radiating to the neck. Pain was rated at 4/10. Physical examination findings included decreased left shoulder range of motion and pain with muscle testing. She had decreased strength. There was left C5 dysesthesia. She had acromioclavicular and glenohumeral joint tenderness with muscle spasms. Hydrocodone 10/325 mg #15 and Norco 5/325 mg #60 were prescribed. Authorization for physical therapy and for TENS was requested. On 08/20/14 pain was rated at 4/10. Medications are referenced as helping with pain. Physical examination findings appear unchanged. Lidoderm was prescribed. On 10/15/14 pain was rated at 4/10 without medications and 1-2/10 with medications. Physical examination findings appear unchanged. Norco 10/325 mg #60 and Lidoderm were prescribed.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use; Opioids, dosing Page(s): 76-80; 86.

Decision rationale: The claimant is more than 15 years status post work-related injury and continues to be treated for ongoing left shoulder pain with numbness and tingling and intermittent pain radiating to the neck. Medications include Norco with pain rated at 4/10 without medications and 1-2/10 with medications. Guidelines indicate that when an injured worker has reached a permanent and stationary status or maximal medical improvement, that does not mean that they are no longer entitled to future medical care. When prescribing controlled substances for pain, satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen) is a short acting combination opioid often used for intermittent or breakthrough pain. In this case, it is being prescribed as part of the claimant's ongoing management. There are no identified issues of abuse, addiction, and poor pain control appears related to being unable to obtain medications. There are no inconsistencies in the history, presentation, the claimant's behaviors, or by physical examination. The total MED (morphine equivalent dose) is less than 120 mg per day consistent with guideline recommendations. Therefore, the continued prescribing of Norco was medically necessary.