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| <b>Case Number:</b>   | CM15-0004491 |                              |            |
| <b>Date Assigned:</b> | 01/16/2015   | <b>Date of Injury:</b>       | 05/06/2005 |
| <b>Decision Date:</b> | 03/12/2015   | <b>UR Denial Date:</b>       | 12/30/2014 |
| <b>Priority:</b>      | Standard     | <b>Application Received:</b> | 01/08/2015 |

### 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: Indiana

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine

### 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 female, who sustained an industrial injury on 5/6/2005. The current diagnoses are neck pain, spinal stenosis in the cervical region, and herniated nucleus pulposus of the cervical spine. Currently, the injured worker complains of neck pain, 4/10 on a subjective pain scale. Treatment to date has included medications and physical therapy. The treating physician is requesting Hydrocodone/APAP 10/325 #60 with 2 refills, which is now under review. On 12/30/2014, Utilization Review had non-certified a request for Hydrocodone/APAP 10/325 #60 with 2 refills. The Hydrocodone/APAP was modified to allow the provider to begin the weaning process. The California MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines were cited.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Hydrocodone/APAP 10/325 #60 with 2 refills:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 78-79.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-96. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Low back; opioids

**Decision rationale:** ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for neck, low back, and shoulder pain "except for short use for severe cases, not to exceed 2 weeks." The patient has exceeded the 2 week recommended treatment length for opioid usage. MTUS does not discourage use of opioids past 2 weeks, but does state that "ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life." The treating physician does not fully document the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, intensity of pain after taking opioid, pain relief, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Additionally, medical documents indicate that the patient has been on Norco in excess of the recommended 2-week limit. As such, the request for Hydrocodone/APAP 10/325 #60 with 2 refills is not medically necessary.