

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0103362		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	06/05/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/04/2009
<b>Decision Date:</b>	07/10/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	04/29/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	05/29/2015

### 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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Pain Management

### 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 38-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 3/4/09. He reported back pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbago, lumbar degenerative disc disease and lumbar radiculopathy. Treatment to date has included oral medications including Norco and Baclofen, physical therapy, home exercise program, radiofrequency left lumbar facet neurotomy and activity restrictions. Currently, the injured worker complains of chronic/severe low back pain with leg pain. He notes 80% relief in back pain. Physical exam noted tenderness to palpation of lumbar spine with numbness in toes. A request for authorization was submitted for Norco 10/325mg #180 and Baclofen 5mg #60.

### 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 Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, specific drug list; Opioids; Weaning of Medications Page(s): 91; 78-80; 124.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 8 C. C. R. 9792. 20 - 9792. 26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) Page(s): 44, 47, 75-79, 120 of 127.

**Decision rationale:** Regarding the request for Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen), California Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that this is an opiate pain medication. Due to high abuse potential, close follow-up is recommended with documentation of analgesic effect, objective functional improvement, side effects, and discussion regarding any aberrant use. Guidelines go on to recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improved function and pain. Within the documentation available for review, there is no indication that the medication is improving the patient's function or pain (in terms of specific examples of functional improvement and percent reduction in pain or reduced NRS) and no discussion regarding aberrant use. As such, there is no clear indication for ongoing use of the medication. Opioids should not be abruptly discontinued, but unfortunately, there is no provision to modify the current request to allow tapering. In light of the above issues, the currently requested Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen) is not medically necessary.

**Baclofen 5mg #60:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle relaxants (for pain) Page(s): 63, 64.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 8 C. C. R. 9792. 20 - 9792. 26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) Page(s): 63-66 of 127.

**Decision rationale:** Regarding the request for baclofen, Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines support the use of non-sedating muscle relaxants to be used with caution as a 2nd line option for the short-term treatment of acute exacerbations of pain. Within the documentation available for review, there is no identification of a specific analgesic benefit or objective functional improvement because of the medication. Additionally, it does not appear that this medication is being prescribed for the short-term treatment of an acute exacerbation, as recommended by guidelines. In the absence of such documentation, the currently requested baclofen is not medically necessary.