

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0130448		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	07/16/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/27/1996
<b>Decision Date:</b>	08/12/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	06/15/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	07/07/2015

### 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: 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 57 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 11/27/1996. The mechanism of injury was a slip and fall. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lower leg joint pain. There is no record of a recent diagnostic study. Treatment to date has included therapy and medication management. In a progress note dated 5/27/2015, the injured worker complains of increased left knee pain and swelling and occasional buckling. Physical examination showed left knee grating and swelling. The treating physician is requesting 3 prescriptions for Norco 10/325 mg #150.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**3 Prescriptions for Norco 10/325mg #150:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen, Opioids.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Section, Weaning of Medications Section Page(s): 74-95, 124.

**Decision rationale:** The MTUS Guidelines do not recommend the use of opioid pain medications, in general, for the management of chronic pain. There is guidance for the rare instance where opioids are needed in maintenance therapy, but the emphasis should remain on non-opioid pain medications and active therapy. Long-term use may be appropriate if the patient is showing measurable functional improvement and reduction in pain in the absence of non-compliance. Functional improvement is defined by either significant improvement in activities of daily living or a reduction in work restriction as measured during the history and physical exam. In this case, the injured worker has been taking Norco for an extended period without objective documentation of functional improvement or significant decrease in pain. Additionally, past utilization reviews have approved Norco for weaning only. It is not recommended to discontinue opioid treatment abruptly, as weaning of medications is necessary to avoid withdrawal symptoms when opioids have been used chronically. This request however is not for a weaning treatment, but to continue treatment. The request for 3 Prescriptions for Norco 10/325mg #150 is determined to not be medically necessary.