

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0132474		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	07/20/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	01/11/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	08/17/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	06/10/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	07/09/2015

### 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 43 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 01-11-2014, secondary to pulling a hose resulting in low back strain. On provider visit dated 05-14-2015 the injured worker has reported low back pain. On examination of the lumbar spine revealed normal findings on flexion, extension, sensation and gait. The diagnoses have included L5-S1 disc protrusion with possible S1 nerve root compression, and left L5-S1 facet syndrome. Treatment to date has included injections, home exercise and medication listed as Norco. The provider requested Hydrocodone 5/325mg #30.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Hydrocodone 5/325mg #30:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 75-80.

**Decision rationale:** Regarding the request for Norco, Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that Norco 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 documentation that the patient has a signed pain contract and a pending urine drug screen according to a progress note from date of service 6/11/2015. However, there is no documentation 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). 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.