

Case Number:	CM15-0134342		
Date Assigned:	07/22/2015	Date of Injury:	01/19/1995
Decision Date:	08/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/04/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/11/2015

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: Maryland, Texas, Virginia

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Allergy and Immunology, Rheumatology

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

This injured worker is a 77-year-old male who reported an industrial injury on 1/19/1995. His diagnoses, and or impression, were noted to include: bilateral knee pain; low back/lumbar pain/lumbago; thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis; and chronic pain syndrome. No current imaging studies were noted. His treatments were noted to include effective long-term medication management with toxicology studies. The progress notes of 3/24/2015 reported a visit to discuss his long-standing back pain that had been managed with the use of as-needed Norco 4 x/day. Objective findings were noted to include no distress, and no documented abnormal findings. The physician's requests for treatments were noted to include the continuation of Percocet as needed. The addendum letter of 6/8/2015 noted that he had been stable on Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen 5/325 mg, 4 x/day, as needed for many years, that this is the only medication that had alleviated his lower back pain, and that he was in a status-quo holding pattern after this many years.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen 5/325mg #108: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone, Opioids Page(s): 51, 74-95. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck and Upper Back (Acute and Chronic), Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Shoulder, Pain, Opioids.

Decision rationale: ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for neck and low back 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 an opioid in excess of the recommended 2-week limit. The treating physician does not detail sufficient information to substantiate the need for continued opioid medication. Prior utilization reviews have noted the need for tapering and weaning, which is appropriate. As such, the request for ODG does not recommend the use of opioids for neck and low back 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 an opioid in excess of the recommended 2-week limit. The treating physician does not detail sufficient information to substantiate the need for continued opioid medication. Prior utilization reviews have noted the need for tapering and weaning, which is appropriate. As such, the question for hydrocodone is not medically necessary.