

Case Number:	CM15-0146136		
Date Assigned:	08/07/2015	Date of Injury:	04/23/2001
Decision Date:	09/23/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/17/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/28/2015

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: Texas, New York, 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 applicant is a represented [REDACTED] beneficiary who has filed a claim for chronic low back and hip pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of April 23, 2001. In a utilization review report dated July 17, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. The claims administrator referenced a July 10, 2015 RFA form and an associated progress note of June 24, 2015 in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On May 27, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of low back pain, 4/10 with medications versus 10/10 without medications. The applicant reported issues with sleep disturbance secondary to pain. In another section of the note, it was stated that the applicant had pain complaints which were at times severe. The applicant was apparently given a refill of Norco. The attending provider continued to state in several sections of the note, noting that the applicant's ability to bathe himself, brush his teeth, and dress himself had all been ameliorated as a result of ongoing medication consumption. The applicant's work status was not explicitly stated, although it did not appear that the applicant was working. A medical-legal evaluator reported on May 12, 2010 that the applicant was not working and had not resumed any type of work. In an earlier note dated April 29, 2013, the applicant was described as having a self-perceived moderate level of functional disability. The attending provider again stated that the applicant's ability to bathe himself, brush his teeth, and dress himself had all been ameliorated as a result of ongoing medication consumption. On June 24, 2015, the applicant reported 7/10 pain with medications versus 10/10 pain without medications. The attending provider again stated that the applicant's ability to bathe himself, brush his teeth, and dress himself had all been ameliorated as a result of ongoing medication consumption.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Hydrocodone 10/325mg #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines criteria for use of opioids, weaning of medications.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 7) When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

Decision rationale: No, the request for hydrocodone - acetaminophen (Norco), a short-acting opioid, was not medically necessary, medically appropriate or indicated here. As noted on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the cardinal criteria for continuation of opioid therapy include evidence of successful return to work, improved functioning, and/or reduced pain achieved as a result of the same. Here, however, the applicant was off of work, a medical-legal evaluator reported on May 12, 2010. The applicant was described as not having resumed any gainful employment since the date of injury; it was stated at that point in time. While the treating provider did report a reduction in pain scores from 10/10 without medications to 7/10 with medications on June 24, 2015, these reports were, however, outweighed by the applicant's failure to return to work and the attending provider's failure to outline meaningful, material, and/or substantive improvements in function (if any) as a result of ongoing medication consumption. The attending provider's reports to the effect that the applicant's ability to brush his teeth, bathe himself, and dress himself as a result of ongoing medication consumption did not constitute evidence of a meaningful, material, or substantive benefit achieved as a result of ongoing Norco usage. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.