MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0147231		
Date Assigned:	08/10/2015	Date of Injury:	08/01/2010
Decision Date:	09/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/29/2015

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: New York
Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology

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 55-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 08-01-2010. The injured worker is currently working full duty. The injured worker is currently diagnosed as having shoulder stiffness after rotator cuff repair. Treatment and diagnostics to date has included shoulder surgery, physical therapy, stretching exercises, and medications. In a progress note dated 06-24-2015, the injured worker reported his shoulder feeling very tight and still requiring two Norco and two Naprosyn. Objective findings included limited range of motion. The physician noted that he warned the injured worker about driving while using the Norco and to try to wean the medication. The treating physician reported requesting authorization for Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 7.5/325mg #60: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74-96.

Decision rationale: According to the CA MTUS and ODG, Norco 7.5/325mg (Hydrocodone/ Acetaminophen) is a short-acting opioid analgesic indicated for moderate to moderately severe pain, and is used to manage both acute and chronic pain. The treatment of chronic pain with any opioid analgesic requires review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. A pain assessment should include current pain, intensity of pain after taking the opiate, and the duration of pain relief. In this case, there is insufficient evidence that the opioids were prescribed according to the CA MTUS guidelines, which recommend prescribing according to function, with specific functional goals, return to work, random drug testing, an opioid contract, and documentation of a prior failure of non-opioid therapy. In addition, the MTUS recommends urine drug screens for patients with poor pain control and to help manage patients at risk of abuse. In this case, the treating physician does not document the least reported pain over the period since last assessment, average pain, and intensity of pain after taking this medication, how long it takes for pain relief, or how long pain relief lasts. It is noted that the injured worker has recently returned to work but the physician had warned him about driving while using Norco and recommended that he try to wean his Norco down so he can drive safely. There is no discussion regarding how this medication has helped the injured worker's level of activity, increased level of function, or significant improvement in their ability to perform activities of daily living. Medical necessity of the requested medication has not been established. Of note, discontinuation of an opioid analgesic should include a taper to avoid withdrawal symptoms. The requested medication is not medically necessary.