

Case Number:	CM15-0167725		
Date Assigned:	09/08/2015	Date of Injury:	10/07/2013
Decision Date:	10/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/26/2015

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, Florida, 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 38 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 10-07-2013. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar disc protrusion, lumbar radiculopathy, lumbar facet syndrome, left knee internal derangement, and elevated blood pressure. Treatment to date has included diagnostics and medications. Urine toxicology (collected 2-26-2015) was inconsistent with prescribed medications and negative for Hydrocodone. Currently, the injured worker complains of low back pain with radiation to the left lower extremity, with numbness and tingling, rated 3 out of 10, and occasional knee pain, rated 2 out of 10. His current medication regimen was not noted. Work status remained total temporary disability. Activities of daily living were not described. He was prescribed medications, including Norco with an unspecified schedule.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco tab 10/325mg: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 3 Initial Approaches to Treatment Page(s): 47-49, 115, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 78-82, 86-87.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines
Page(s): 79, 80 and 88 of 127.

Decision rationale: This claimant was injured in 2013 with diagnoses of lumbar disc protrusion, lumbar radiculopathy, lumbar facet syndrome, left knee internal derangement, and elevated blood pressure. A urine drug test was negative for prescribed Hydrocodone. There is still low back pain, and the current medication regimen was not noted. The dosing schedule of Norco is unspecified. The current California web-based MTUS collection was reviewed in addressing this request. They note in the Chronic Pain section: When to Discontinue Opioids: Weaning should occur under direct ongoing medical supervision as a slow taper except for the below mentioned possible indications for immediate discontinuation. They should be discontinued: (a) If there is no overall improvement in function, unless there are extenuating circumstances. When to Continue Opioids: (a) If the patient has returned to work; (b) If the patient has improved functioning and pain. In the clinical records provided, it is not clearly evident these key criteria have been met in this case. Moreover, in regards to the long term use of opiates, the MTUS also poses several analytical necessity questions such as: has the diagnosis changed, what other medications is the patient taking, are they effective, producing side effects, what treatments have been attempted since the use of opioids, and what is the documentation of pain and functional improvement and compare to baseline. These are important issues, and they have not been addressed in this case. As shared earlier, there especially is no documentation of functional improvement with the regimen. Given these issues, the tenuous urine drug test results suggesting non-compliance with Hydrocodone, the request for the opiate usage was not medically necessary and appropriately not certified per MTUS guideline review.