

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0167985		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/08/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/31/2000
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/07/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/11/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	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: New Jersey, Alabama, California  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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 53 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on March 31, 2000, incurring low back injuries. She was diagnosed with lumbar disc disease. She underwent a lumbar spinal fusion. Treatment included epidural steroid injection, which decreased her pain approximately 50%, pain medications giving significant partial relief allowing for functional activities of daily living, and modification with activities. Currently, the injured worker complained of ongoing low back and leg pain. A lumbar Magnetic Resonance Imaging performed in February 2015, revealed lumbar spinal stenosis, multi-level disc herniation and facet joint arthropathy. The injured worker rated her pain 8 out of 10 without pain medications. She was able to sleep and perform home chores and simple grooming activities with medications. The treatment requested for authorization for a prescription for Norco.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**One prescription of Norco 10/325mg #120 with 1 refill: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, Criteria for use.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines  
Criteria for use of opioids Page(s): 76-79.

**Decision rationale:** According to MTUS guidelines, Norco (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) is a synthetic opioid indicated for the pain management but not recommended as a first line oral analgesic. In addition and according to MTUS guidelines, ongoing use of opioids should follow specific rules: "(a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed, and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. (b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. (c) Office: Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Four domains have been proposed as most relevant for ongoing monitoring of chronic pain patients on opioids: pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant (or non-adherent) drug-related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the "4 A's" (analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and aberrant drug taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework". According to the patient's file, there is no objective documentation of pain and functional improvement to justify continuous use of Norco. Norco was used since at least September 2014 without documentation of functional improvement or evidence of return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. In addition, a weaning process was initially recommended on April 8, 2015. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg #120 with 1 refill is not medically necessary.