

Case Number:	CM15-0199545		
Date Assigned:	10/20/2015	Date of Injury:	05/07/2010
Decision Date:	12/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/09/2015

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: Arizona, California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 is a 49 year old female with a date of injury of May 7, 2010. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for displace lumbar intervertebral disc, thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis, enthesopathy of the knee, lumbar spondylosis, lumbar stenosis, and lower back pain with persistent spasm and trigger points. Medical records dated August 18, 2015 indicate that the injured worker complained of lower back pain and sciatica. A progress note dated September 28, 2015 documented complaints of thoracolumbar to lumbosacral pain, right knee pain, and pain rated at a level of 7 out of 10 and 4 out of 10 with medications. Records also indicate that the injured worker was unable to discontinue Norco due to increased impairment with activities of daily living. Per the treating physician (July 17, 2015), the employee was not working. The physical exam dated August 18, 2015 reveals no tenderness of the lumbar spine, full range of motion of the lumbar spine, normal gait, and negative straight leg raise testing. The progress note dated September 28, 2105 documented a physical examination that showed painful lumbar extension, tenderness to palpation of the thoracolumbar to lumbosacral paraspinals with four trigger points which radiate both cephalad and caudally, and tenderness to palpation of the right medial distal quadriceps and medial leg. Treatment has included one session of physical therapy, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulator unit, and medications (Norco since at least April of 2015; Neurontin and Flector patches). The urine drug screen dated July 17, 2015 showed results that were positive for Norco. The original utilization review (October 2, 2015) non-certified a request for Hydrocodone (Norco) 10-325mg #140.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Hydrocodone (Norco) 10/325mg #140: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Opioids for chronic pain, Opioids for neuropathic pain.

Decision rationale: Hydrocodone is a short acting opioid used for breakthrough pain. According to the MTUS guidelines, it is not indicated as 1st line therapy for neuropathic pain, and chronic back pain. It is not indicated for mechanical or compressive etiologies. It is recommended for a trial basis for short-term use. Long Term-use has not been supported by any trials. In this case, the claimant had been on Hydrocodone for 6 months. There was no mention of Tylenol, or weaning failure. The claimant still required a burst of NSAID injections and anti-epileptics to manage pain. The continued use of Hydrocodone is not medically necessary.