

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0029456		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	02/23/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	02/20/2001
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/07/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	02/13/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/18/2015

### 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, Michigan, 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 was a 37 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury, February 20, 2001. According to progress note of January 5, 2015, the injured workers chief complaint was lower back pain. The injured worker rated the pain a 6 out of 10; 0 being no pain and 10 being the worse pain. The physical exam range of motion was restricted with flexion limited to 60 degrees limited by pain and extension limited to 15 degrees limited by pain. The injured worker was diagnosed with chronic pain syndrome and L5-S1 left posterolateral annular tear and chronic low back pain with left radiculopathy. The injured worker previously received the following treatments pain medication, acupuncture, ice, heat, exercise, MRI of the lumbar spine, random toxicology laboratory studies, chiropractic services, EMG/NCS (electromyography and nerve conduction studies) of the lower extremities which was normal. January 5, 23015, the primary treating physician requested authorization for a prescription for Norco 10/325mg quantity 90. On February 12, 2015, the Utilization Review denied authorization for a prescription for Norco 10/325mg quantity 90. The denial was based on the MTUS/ACOEM and ODG guidelines.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325mg #90:** Upheld

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

**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 file, there is no objective documentation of pain and functional improvement to justify continuous use of Norco. Norco was used for longtime without documentation of functional improvement or evidence of return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg #90 is not medically necessary.