

Case Number:	CM15-0033009		
Date Assigned:	02/26/2015	Date of Injury:	03/05/2013
Decision Date:	04/08/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/11/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/23/2015

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, New York, 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 applicant is a represented 50-year-old [REDACTED] beneficiary who has filed a claim for chronic pain syndrome and alleged brachial plexopathy reportedly associated with an industrial injury of March 5, 2013. In a Utilization Review Report dated February 11, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Norco. A progress note dated January 19, 2015 was referenced in the determination. The claims administrator also referenced a historical Utilization Review Report of January 14, 2015. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. In an RFA form dated January 7, 2015, Norco was renewed. In a progress note dated December 22, 2014, the applicant reported 7-8/10 shoulder, chest wall, and right-sided flank pain. The attending provider stated that the applicant would spend most of the time watching TV and/or lying on a couch without his medications. The applicant had undergone failed thoracic outlet syndrome release surgery, it was acknowledged. The applicant's medication list reportedly included Flonase, Norco, Zestril, Ativan, metformin, montelukast, Prilosec, Spiriva, baclofen, and Lipitor, it was stated. The applicant was placed off of work, on total temporary disability, while Norco was renewed. It was suggested that the applicant consider a functional restoration program.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen 10/325mg #90: 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 7) When to Continue Opioids Page(s): 80.

Decision rationale: No, the request for Norco (hydrocodone-acetaminophen), a short-acting opioid, was not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. As noted on page 80 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the cardinal criteria for continuation of opioid therapy include evidence of successful return to work, improved functioning, and/or reduced pain achieved as a result of the same. Here, however, the applicant was/is off of work, on total temporary disability, despite ongoing Norco usage. The attending provider's commentary to the fact that the applicant's pain complaints were still scored at 7/10, coupled with the attending provider's failure to outline any meaningful or material improvements in function effected as a result of ongoing Norco usage (if any) did not, furthermore, make a compelling case for continuation of Norco. The attending provider's commentary to the fact that the applicant would be couch-ridden or bedridden without his medications does not, in and of itself, constitute evidence of meaningful and material improvement achieved as a result of ongoing Norco usage. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.