

Case Number:	CM15-0034234		
Date Assigned:	02/27/2015	Date of Injury:	02/01/2007
Decision Date:	07/01/2015	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: 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 51 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 02/01/2007. The injured worker was noted to complain of back pop resulting in pain secondary to lifting a towhead. On provider visit dated 11/24/2014 the injured worker has reported back pain, headaches and numbness to legs. On examination of the thoracolumbar spine revealed tenderness and spasms with a restricted range of motion. In addition, a positive straight leg raise was noted. The diagnoses have included status post lumbar spine surgery disc replacement and fusion with radiculopathy and fecal incontinence with probable neurogenic bladder. Treatment to date has included medication Norco, Lyrica and muscle relaxers, physical therapy and cortisone injections. The injured worker was noted not to be working. CT of the lumbar spine revealed limited study at L3 through S1 due to artifact and L2-L3 narrowing of the central canal and neural foramina due top circumferentially bulging disc, shortened pedicles and facet joint hypertrophy. The provider requested Norco 10-325mg. There was no clear evidence of any significant reduction in pain level or improvement in functional capacity resulting from Norco use.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10-325mg PO BID #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 78, 99, 29.

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. There is no documentation of compliance of the patient with his medications. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10-325mg PO BID #60 s is not medically necessary.