

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0034933		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	03/03/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/26/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/10/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	02/06/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/25/2015

### 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 is a 35-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on November 26, 2013. The diagnoses have included cervical spine sprain/strain, thoracic spine sprain/strain, lumbar spine sprain/strain and right knee patellofemoral arthralgia. Treatment to date has included knee surgery, epidural steroid injection, home exercise program, medications and diagnostic studies. Currently, the injured worker complains of numbness and tingling of the bilateral lower extremities and knee buckling with popping and clicking. On examination, the injured worker has tenderness to palpation of the lumbar spine paravertebral musculature and range of motion of the lumbar spine. He has increased radicular pain down the bilateral lower extremities and decreased sensation down the bilateral L5-S1 dermatomal distributions. Examination of the right knee reveals tenderness to palpation over the peripatellar region and the injured worker has a decreased range of motion. On February 6, 2015, Utilization Review modified a request for Norco 7.5/325 mg #60, noting that the medication is not appropriate for long-term use and is modified to allow for weaning. In addition, the documentation does not indicate any functional improvement related to the use of the medication. The California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule was cited. On February 25, 2015, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of Norco 7.5/325 mg #60.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 7.5/325 mg #60:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, and 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 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 7.5/325mg #60 is not medically necessary.