

Case Number:	CM15-0034954		
Date Assigned:	03/03/2015	Date of Injury:	11/16/2009
Decision Date:	04/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/16/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/24/2015

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:

This 44-year-old female reported a work-related injury on 11/16/2009. According to the PR2 dated 12/11/14, the injured worker (IW) reports continued, worsening low back pain rated 5/10. She also has left shoulder post-operative pain. The IW was diagnosed with chronic pain. Previous treatments include medications, home exercise program, epidural steroid injections, physical therapy, interferential stimulator and shoulder surgery. The treating provider requests Flexmid tablets 7.5mg, #60 and Norco tablets 5/325mg, #120. The Utilization Review on 02/16/2015 non-certified the request for Flexmid tablets 7.5mg, #60 and modified the request for Norco tablets 5/325mg, allowing #90, citing CA MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Flexmid 7.5mg #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Muscle relaxants (for pain) Page(s): 64-66.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Cyclobenzaprine Page(s): 41.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, a non sedating muscle relaxant is recommended with caution as a second line option for short term treatment of acute exacerbations in patients with chronic lumbosacral pain. Efficacy appears to diminish over time and prolonged use may cause dependence. The patient in this case does not have clear evidence of spasm and the prolonged use of Fexmid 7.5mg #60 is not justified. The request is not medically necessary.

Norco 5/325mg #120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids for chronic pain Page(s): 80.

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 5/325mg #120 is not medically necessary.