

Case Number:	CM15-0035237		
Date Assigned:	03/03/2015	Date of Injury:	06/20/2003
Decision Date:	04/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Pain Management

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 female, who sustained an industrial injury on June 20, 2003. She has reported right arm injury following a motor vehicle accident. The diagnoses have included osteoarthritis of the upper arm. Treatment to date has included medications, bracing, and surgery. Currently, the IW complains of left elbow pain. Physical findings are noted as painful pronation and supination of the left elbow. Range of motion with flexion and extension was 20-100 degrees, and there is a noticeable valgus deformation. The records indicate that prior requests for Norco had been modified to wean her off of this medication, and that she had been utilizing Norco since at least 2010. On February 18, 2015, Utilization Review non-certified Norco 10/325mg. The Chronic Pain Medical Treatment guidelines were cited. On February 24, 2015, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of Norco 10/325mg.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg, quantity unspecified: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen, Criteria for use of opioids.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 8 C.C.R. 9792.20 - 9792.26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) Page(s): 44, 47, 75-79, 120 of 127.

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen), California Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that this is an opiate pain medication. Due to high abuse potential, close follow-up is recommended with documentation of analgesic effect, objective functional improvement, side effects, and discussion regarding any aberrant use. Guidelines go on to recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improved function and pain. Within the documentation available for review, there is no indication that the medication is improving the patient's function or pain (in terms of specific examples of functional improvement and percent reduction in pain or reduced NRS), no documentation regarding side effects, and no discussion regarding aberrant use. Additionally, the current request for Norco does not include a quantity, making it an open-ended request. Unfortunately, guidelines do not support the open-ended use of pain medication and there is no provision to modify the current request. As such, there is no clear indication for ongoing use of the medication. Opioids should not be abruptly discontinued, but unfortunately, there is no provision to modify the current request to allow tapering. In light of the above issues, the currently requested Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen) is not medically necessary.