

Case Number:	CM15-0037737		
Date Assigned:	03/06/2015	Date of Injury:	09/13/2005
Decision Date:	04/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/19/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/27/2015

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

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 50-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 09/13/05. She reports low back and lower extremity pain. Diagnoses include Meralgia paresthetica, sacroilitis, lumbar spondylosis, post-lumbar laminectomy and lumbar or thoracic radiculopathy. Treatments to date include medications and surgery. In a progress note dated 02/13/15, the treating provider recommends continued treatment with Norco, Sumpriptan, gabapentin, lidocaine patches, and physical therapy. On 02/19/15, Utilization Review non-certified the Norco, citing MTUS guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 7.5/325mg #120: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Chronic Pain Guidelines Page(s): 78. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG-TWC) - Disability Duration Guidelines; Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) - Work Loss Data Institute, Reed Group/The Medical Disability Advisor.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines CRITERIA FOR USE OF OPIOIDS Page(s): 76-78, 88-89.

Decision rationale: The patient presents with pain and weakness in her lower back and lower extremity. The request is for NORCO 7.5/325MG #120. Per 02/13/15 progress report, the patient is currently taking Gabapentin, Cyclobenzaprine, Sumavel DosePro, Vimpat, Lisinopril, Hydrochlorothiazide and Norco. The patient has been utilizing Norco since at least 08/26/14. Work status is not known. Regarding chronic opiate use, MTUS guidelines page 89 states, "Pain should be assessed at each visit, and functioning should be measured at 6-month intervals using a numerical scale or validated instrument." MTUS page 78 also requires documentation of the 4A's --analgesia, ADLs, adverse side effects, and adverse behavior--, as well as "pain assessment" or outcome measures that include current pain, average pain, least pain, intensity of pain after taking the opioid, time it takes for medication to work and duration of pain relief. MTUS guidelines page 90 states that Hydrocodone has a recommended maximum dose of 60mg/24 hours. The review of the reports does not show any discussion specific to this medication other than the treater's request for refills. The 4 A's including analgesia, ADL's, side effects, and aberrant drug seeking behavior are not addressed as required by MTUS for chronic opiate use. There are no before and after pain scales to show analgesia; no specific ADL's are mentioned to show functional improvement; no urine toxicology, CURES reports showing opiate monitoring. Given the lack of sufficient documentation demonstrating efficacy for chronic opiate use, the patient should slowly be weaned as outlined in MTUS guidelines. The request for Norco IS NOT medically necessary.