

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0038243		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	03/06/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	12/26/2002
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/10/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	02/25/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	03/01/2015

### 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: Family Practice

### 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 60-year-old male sustained a work related injury on 12/26/2002. According to an office visit dated 01/12/2015, the injured worker complained of worsening bilateral hand, wrist and forearm pain. He complained of tingling and numbness radiating from wrist and hands to forearms and elbows. He also continued to complain of increased low back pain with radiation to bilateral lower extremities. Pain level was rated 7-8 on a scale of 1-10. The injured worker reported needing Norco a maximum of 6 per day. He reported having a flare-up of his pain with use of Norco at a maximum of 4 per day. He also reported that he needed to drink in order to stay at Norco maximum 4 per day. He continued to use Norco at 6 per day maximum. The provider made reference to a progress report of 11/12/2014, where he noted that the injured worker stated without his pain medications, he was mostly bedridden due to his pain. His pain medications allowed him to perform activities of daily living, run errands, household chores, walk 10 to 20 minutes every day as well as wax his wife's car occasionally. He also reported flare-up of pain with these activities. Current medications included Norco and Senna. Diagnoses included wrist joint pain, hand joint pain, cervical spine strain, thoracic degenerative disc disease, cervicgia, thoracic radiculitis and thoracic pain. According to the records submitted for review, the injured worker has utilized Norco since 2012.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325mg #180:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen, Opioids, Weaning of Medications.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 76-78, 80.

**Decision rationale:** The MTUS/Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines comment on the long-term use of opioids, including Norco. These guidelines have established criteria on the use of opioids for the ongoing management of pain. Actions should include: prescriptions from a single practitioner and from a single pharmacy. The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. There should be an ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use and side effects. Pain assessment should include: current pain, the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. There should be evidence of documentation of the "4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring." These four domains include: pain relief, side effects, physical and psychological functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant drug-related behaviors. Further, there should be consideration of a consultation with a multidisciplinary pain clinic if doses of opioids are required beyond what is usually required for the condition or pain that does not improve on opioids in 3 months. There should be consideration of an addiction medicine consult if there is evidence of substance misuse (Pages 76-78). Finally, the guidelines indicate that for chronic pain, the long-term efficacy of opioids is unclear. Failure to respond to a time-limited course of opioids has led to the suggestion of reassessment and consideration of alternative therapy (Page 80). Based on the review of the medical records, there is insufficient documentation in support of these stated MTUS/Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines for the ongoing use of opioids. There is insufficient documentation of the "4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring." The treatment course of opioids in this patient has extended well beyond the timeframe required for a reassessment of therapy. In summary, there is insufficient documentation to support the chronic use of an opioid in this patient. Treatment with Norco is not considered as medically necessary.