

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0048177		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	03/20/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/06/1986
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/01/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	03/03/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	03/13/2015

### 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: Internal 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 61-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 11/6/1986. He has reported a slip and fall resulting in back pain. The diagnoses have included cervical disc protrusion per Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) from 12/31/14, low back pack pain, lumbar spinal stenosis per Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) 12/17/2004, and depression/anxiety. Treatment to date has included medication therapy and home exercises. Currently, the IW complains of increased neck pain and back pain rated 10/10 VAS without medications and 5/10 VAS with medications. The physical examination from 1/12/15 documented there was significant tenderness to cervical spine with restricted Range of Motion (ROM). The plan of care included continuation of Norco as ordered.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325mg, 180 tablets:** Overturned

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines opioids.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page 74-96. Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen Page 91.

**Decision rationale:** Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS) Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines (page 89) present the strategy for maintenance for long-term users of opioids. "Do not attempt to lower the dose if it is working." Supplemental doses of break-through medication may be required for incidental pain, end-of dose pain, and pain that occurs with predictable situations. The standard increase in dose is 25 to 50% for mild pain and 50 to 100% for severe pain. Actual maximum safe dose will be patient-specific and dependent on current and previous opioid exposure, as well as on whether the patient is using such medications chronically. 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 drug-related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the 4A'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 for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs. Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen (Norco) is indicated for moderate to moderately severe pain. The primary treating physician's progress reports dated 1/12/15 and 2/9/15 documented a history of neck and back complaints. Analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and aberrant behaviors were addressed. Medical records document objective physical examination findings. Medical records documented objective evidence of pathology on MRI magnetic resonance imaging studies. Medical records document regular physician clinical evaluations and monitoring. Per MTUS, Hydrocodone /Acetaminophen (Norco) is indicated for moderate to moderately severe pain. The request for Norco (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) is supported by the MTUS guidelines. Therefore, the request for Norco 10/325 mg is medically necessary.