

Case Number:	CM15-0050096		
Date Assigned:	03/23/2015	Date of Injury:	01/11/2013
Decision Date:	05/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/16/2015

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 45 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 1/11/2013. Diagnoses include L4-5 disc space collapse with left greater than right stenosis, and L4-5 instability with retrolisthesis. Treatment to date has included magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), EMG (electromyography), TENS unit, medications, epidural steroid injections and physical therapy. Per the Primary Treating Physician's Progress Report dated 1/12/2015, the injured worker reported mid back pain, which rates at 5/10. She has stabbing and aching low back pain, which rates as 6/10. She also has burning bilateral ankle pain. She reports taking Norco and Soma but none of them have helped her. Physical examination revealed tenderness in the paraspinous musculature of the thoracic and lumbar regions, bilaterally. There is spasm and reduced range of motion to the lumbar spine. Here was decreased sensation to the L4, L5 and S1 dermatomes on the right. The plan of care included medications and modified work restrictions. Authorization was requested on 1/12/2015 for Norco 10/325mg #30.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg, thirty count: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

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. 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.