

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0051450		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	03/24/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	07/02/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/01/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	03/12/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	03/18/2015

### 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: New Jersey, Michigan, California  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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 50 year old, female, who sustained a work related injury on 7/2/13. The diagnosis has included cervical sprain and cervical disc disease. Treatments have included MRI of cervical spine on 6/20/14, TENS unit therapy with no benefit, physical therapy without much benefit, medications, acupuncture and electrodiagnostic studies of arms on 2/12/15. In the PR-2 dated 1/14/15, the injured worker complains of more pain on the left side of cervical spine with stiffness. She cannot lift anything with left hand. The cold weather aggravates her symptoms. She has stiffness and tightness on left side of neck with palpation. Left neck rotation is restricted and painful. The treatment plan is continue with Norco pain medication and await approval of cervical spine injections.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325mg #90, prescribed 2-18-15: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for use of opioids Page(s): 76-79.

**Decision rationale:** According to MTUS guidelines, Norco (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) is a synthetic opioid indicated for the pain management but not recommended as a first line oral analgesic. In addition and according to MTUS guidelines, ongoing use of opioids should follow specific rules: "(a) Prescriptions from a single practitioner taken as directed, and all prescriptions from a single pharmacy. (b) The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. (c) Office: Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. 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 (or non-adherent) drug-related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the "4 A'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." According to the patient file, there is no objective documentation of pain and functional improvement to justify continuous use of Norco. Norco was used for longtime without documentation of functional improvement or evidence of return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg #90 is not medically necessary.

**Waiting for cervical spine injections:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 181.

**Decision rationale:** According to MTUS guidelines, cervical epidural corticosteroid injections are of uncertain benefit and should be reserved for patients who otherwise would undergo open surgical procedures for nerve root compromise. Epidural steroid injection is optional for radicular pain to avoid surgery. It may offer short-term benefit, however there is no significant long term benefit or reduction for the need of surgery. Furthermore, there is no clinical and objective documentation of radiculopathy. MTUS guidelines do not recommend epidural injections for neck pain without radiculopathy. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.