

Case Number:	CM15-0087748		
Date Assigned:	05/11/2015	Date of Injury:	11/26/2003
Decision Date:	06/12/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/07/2015

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:

This is a 52-year-old male with a November 26, 2003 date of injury. A progress note dated April 10, 2015 documents subjective findings (head pain; bilateral arm pain; bilateral leg pain; left shoulder pain; bilateral buttock pain; bilateral elbow pain; bilateral hip pain; bilateral hand pain; bilateral knee pain; abdominal pain; lower back pain; bilateral ankle/foot pain; groin pain; least pain is rated at a level of 6/10; average pain is rated at a level of 7/10; worst pain rated at a level of 8/10), objective findings (able to lay supine on exam table; no evidence of overmedication, sedation, or withdrawal symptoms; ambulates with steady gait with use of a single point cane), and current diagnoses (chronic pain syndrome; failed back surgery; post laminectomy pain; lumbar pain with radiculopathy; lumbar degenerative disc disease; chronic depression; chronic insomnia; anxiety). Treatments to date have included medications, use of a cane, multiple back surgeries, psychotherapy, physical therapy, aqua therapy, and stretching. The treating physician documented a plan of care that included two prescriptions for Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

2 prescriptions of Norco (Hydrocodone-Acetaminophen) 10/325mg #180: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Long term users of Opioids, Weaning of medications.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids
Page(s): 74-96.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The 2 prescriptions of Norco (Hydrocodone-Acetaminophen) 10/325mg #180 are not medically necessary and appropriate.