

Case Number:	CM15-0088869		
Date Assigned:	05/13/2015	Date of Injury:	08/17/2011
Decision Date:	06/19/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/09/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/08/2015

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, Alabama, 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 an industrial injury on 08/17/2011 when she slipped and fell. She reported immediate pain throughout her entire back and right arm. Her right wrist immediately became swollen and purple in color. Treatment to date has included medications, wrist brace for the right wrist, x-rays of the right wrist, shoulder back and neck, massage therapy, right shoulder surgery, acupuncture and physical therapy. According to an orthopaedic consultation dated 04/03/2015, the injured worker complained of neck pain with radiating pain in both parascapular regions, pain from her neck to mid back, cracking with movement in the left shoulder which caused pain, limited range of motion of the right arm, sleep disturbance and constant numbness in the bilateral upper extremities. Current medications included Hydrocodone, Tramadol and Omeprazole. Diagnoses included cervical strain with bilateral trapezial trigger points and moderate mid thoracic back pain. Recommendations included analgesics and physical therapy for the neck and MRI of the thoracic spine. Currently under review is the request for Norco 7.5/325mg quantity 40.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 7.5/ 325 mg Qty 40: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 78-80, 91, 124.

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's 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 7.5/325mg #40 is not medically necessary.