

Case Number:	CM14-0125494		
Date Assigned:	09/24/2014	Date of Injury:	07/27/2007
Decision Date:	10/24/2014	UR Denial Date:	08/07/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/07/2014

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Emergency Medicine and is licensed to practice in New York. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

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 patient is a 59-year-old male who was injured on July 27, 2007. The patient continued to experience low back pain. Physical examination was notable for grossly intact motor strength. Diagnoses included lumbar disc herniation, lumbar disc degeneration, and chronic low back pain. Treatment included surgery, medications, and epidural steroid injections. Request for authorization for Norco was submitted for consideration.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco (Unspecified Dosage/Quantity): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids for Chronic Pain Page(s): 80.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 11; 74-96.

Decision rationale: Norco is the compounded medication containing hydrocodone and acetaminophen. Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that opioids are not recommended as a first line therapy. Opioid should be part of a treatment plan specific for the patient and should follow criteria for use. Criteria for use include establishment of a treatment plan, determination if pain is nociceptive or neuropathic, failure of pain relief with non-opioid

analgesics, setting of specific functional goals, and opioid contract with agreement for random drug testing. If analgesia is not obtained, opioids should be discontinued. The patient should be screened for likelihood that he or she could be weaned from the opioids if there is no improvement in pain or function. It is recommended for short term use if first-line options, such as acetaminophen or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) have failed. Opioids may be a safer choice for patients with cardiac and renal disease than antidepressants or anticonvulsants. Acetaminophen is recommended for treatment of chronic pain & acute exacerbations of chronic pain. Acetaminophen overdose is a well-known cause of acute liver failure. Hepatotoxicity from therapeutic doses is unusual. Renal insufficiency occurs in 1 to 2% of patients with overdose. The recommended dose for mild to moderate pain is 650 to 1000 mg orally every 4 hours with a maximum of 4 g/day. In this case the patient had been taking the Norco since at least August 2013 and had not obtained analgesia. In addition there is documentation that the patient is at risk for opioid use, but there is no documentation that he has signed an opioid contract or is participating in urine drug testing. Criteria for long-term opioid use have not been met. Treatment is not medically necessary and appropriate.