

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0210447		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	12/23/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/04/2002
<b>Decision Date:</b>	02/20/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	12/06/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	12/15/2014

### 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. 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 patient is a 54-year-old man who sustained a work-related injury on April 25, 2000. Subsequently, the patient developed chronic low back pain. According to a progress report dated November 25, 2014 the patient continued to experience chronic low back pain with radiation into the left lower extremity. The pain radiated down his left ankle and it was constant. Occasionally, the pain will radiate down to his right thigh. The patient rated the level of his pain as a 5-6/10. The patient continued to take OxyCotin BID and Norco. The medications helped bring his pain down to 5/10. The patient most recent UDS from October 28, 2014 was consistent with prescribed analgesics and did not detect any illicit drug or alcohol abuse. Physical examination revealed severely limited range of motion in lumbar spine in all planes. Moderate tenderness to left lumbar paraspinal muscles. Patellar deep tendon reflexes were 1+/4 bilaterally and the Achilles DTRs were absent. Sensation to light touch was within normal limits bilaterally. There was mildly weakened extensor hallucis longus on left. The patient had difficulty walking on toes and heels. There was positive straight leg raise on left. The patient was diagnosed with chronic low back pain, lumbar fusion at L3-L5, lumbar radiculopathy, and lumbar postlaminectomy syndrome. The provider requested authorization for Norco.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325mg #180:** Upheld

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

**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 #180 is not medically necessary.