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| Case Number: | CM14-0214500 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 01/07/2015 | Date of Injury: | 08/05/2002 |
| Decision Date: | 02/28/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 11/25/2014 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 12/22/2014 |

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: Texas, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 51 years old female patient who sustained an injury on 08/05/2002. She sustained the injury while working on a machine. The current diagnoses include status post anterior cervical fusion at C5-6, thoracic strain, lumbar L5-S1 disc dessication and bulging, bilateral shoulder impingement syndrome, right carpal tunnel syndrome, left wrist pain, stress/depression and insomnia. Per the doctor's note dated 10/29/2014, she had complaints of neck pain, back pain, bilateral shoulder pain and bilateral wrist and hand pain with pin and needle sensation in bilateral upper extremities. The physical examination revealed cervical spine- well healed surgical scar, tenderness, decreased range of motion and decreased sensation in C5 and C6 dermatomes on the right. The medications list includes prilosec, clonazepam, zolpidem, venlafaxine, naproxen and norco. She has had multiple diagnostic studies including MRI of cervical spine, lumbar spine, bilateral shoulders and bilateral wrists and hands. She has undergone anterior cervical fusion at C5-6 in 1/6/2014; left carpal tunnel release in 12/2003. She has had physical therapy visits, acupuncture visits and cervical epidural injections for this injury.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines CRITERIA FOR USE OF OPIOIDS Page(s): 76-80. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Chapter: Pain (updated 02/10/15) Opioids, criteria for use.

Decision rationale: Norco contains hydrocodone and acetaminophen. Hydrocodone is an opioid analgesic. According to the cited guidelines, "A therapeutic trial of opioids should not be employed until the patient has failed a trial of non-opioid analgesics. Before initiating therapy, the patient should set goals, and the continued use of opioids should be contingent on meeting these goals." The records provided do not specify that that patient has set goals regarding the use of opioid analgesic. The treatment failure with non-opioid analgesics is not specified in the records provided. Other criteria for ongoing management of opioids are: "The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. Continuing review of overall situation with regard to nonopioid means of pain control. Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Consider the use of a urine drug screen to assess for the use or the presence of illegal drugs." The records provided do not provide a documentation of response in regards to pain control and functional improvement to opioid analgesic for this patient. The continued review of the overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control is not documented in the records provided. As recommended by the cited guidelines a documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects should be maintained for ongoing management of opioid analgesic, these are not specified in the records provided. A recent urine drug screen report is not specified in the records provided. This patient does not meet criteria for ongoing continued use of opioids analgesic. The medical necessity of Norco 10/325mg is not established for this patient.