

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0085645		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	07/23/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	06/11/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	06/02/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	05/23/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	06/09/2014

### 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, 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:

This 46 year old woman sustained an industrial injury on 6/11/2013. The mechanism of injury is not detailed. Evaluations include neck and shoulder x-rays and cervical spine MRI. Diagnoses include cervical disc disease and cervical radiculopathy. Treatment has included oral medications, trigger point injection, and physical therapy. Physician notes dated 1/15/2014 show complaints of neck pain rated 7-8/10. Recommendations include trans-facet epidural injections, possible medical branch block injections, continue current medication regimen, urine drug screen, TENS unit for home use, and follow up in four to six weeks.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 5/325 mg #60:** Upheld

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

**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 since at least June 2013 without documentation of functional improvement or evidence of return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. As a matter of fact, during the period Norco was used, the patient went from working with modified duty to total temporary disability and her pain level remained the same. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 5/325mg #60 is not medically necessary.