

Case Number:	CM14-0097280		
Date Assigned:	09/16/2014	Date of Injury:	02/20/2003
Decision Date:	06/12/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/17/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/25/2014

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:

The injured worker is a 56 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury to the cervical spine on 02/20/2003. Treatment to date has included conservative care, medications, x-rays, MRIs, conservative therapies, cervical surgery, psychological evaluations/therapy, and functional restoration program. At the time of the request for authorization, the injured worker complained of continued chronic neck pain radiating to the bilateral upper extremities with changes. Pain was rated at 7/10 and described as sharp, burning and shooting with numbness and tingling in the upper extremities. The pain is reported to be 8/10 in severity without medications, and 6/10 with medications. The injured worker's medications consisted of Flexeril twice daily, and Norco which had been reduced to 2-3 tablets per day. The diagnoses included post laminectomy syndrome of the cervical region, displacement of cervical intervertebral disc without myelopathy, cervicalgia, and insomnia due to medical condition. The request for authorization included Norco 10/325 mg #90 which was modified to Norco 10/325 mg up to #61.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg, #90: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen, On Going Management.

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. There is no documentation of compliance of the patient with his medications. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg, #90 is not medically necessary.