

Case Number:	CM15-0014212		
Date Assigned:	02/02/2015	Date of Injury:	08/18/2009
Decision Date:	03/25/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/25/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/26/2015

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 injured worker is a 44 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 8/18/09. The PR2 on 12/17/14 noted that the injured worker has complaints of left hip pain due to abnormal gait caused by the lumbar spine. He has complaints of low back pain, left shoulder, neck pain and pain on the left side of the ribs. PR2 dated 1/28/15 noted that the injured worker complains of left shoulder and cervical spine pain that has not subsided. Treatment plan noted that the injured worker is to follow up with psychiatry for psychological symptoms, continue to take medications and waiting to see an orthopedic surgeon. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of the cervical spine performed on 1/4/15 impression noted normal cervical spine. Impression from left shoulder noted moderate to moderate severe suprapinatus tendinosis/tendonitis with surface fraying; no discrete tear identified but it is possible that the findings represent bursal surface partial tearing filled with hypertrophic bursitis and no evidence for labor tear, biceps or fracture. According to the utilization review performed on 12/25/14, the requested Hydrocodone 5/325mg #60 has been modified to 1 prescription of hydrocodone 5/325mg #36. Norco guidelines were used in the utilization review noting that weaning is recommended for long-term opioids users due to withdrawal.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Hydrocodone 5/325mg #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, 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. Pain assessment should include: current pain; the least reported pain over the period since last assessment; average pain; intensity of pain after taking the opioid; how long it takes for pain relief; and how long pain relief lasts. Satisfactory response to treatment may be indicated by the patient's decreased pain, increased level of function, or improved quality of life. Information from family members or other caregivers should be considered in determining the patient's response to treatment. The 4 A's for Ongoing Monitoring: 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 Hydrocodone 5/325mg #60 is not medically necessary.