

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0016538		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	02/04/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	10/03/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	03/25/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	01/14/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	01/28/2015

### 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 York, Tennessee  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Emergency 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 43 year old male who sustained an industrial fall injury to his lower back and abdomen on October 3, 2011. The injured worker was diagnosed with lower abdominal contusion, cervical and lumbar strain. According to the primary treating physician's progress report on January 8, 2015, the injured worker had modest pain in the sacroiliac joint (right greater than left), gait was easy, squats and heel to toe within normal limits, straight leg raise negative and reflexes and sensation were intact. Current medications consist of Norco, Neurontin, Diclofenac and Gabapentin. There were no documented treatment modalities in place. The injured worker has returned to work with limited duties. The treating physician requested authorization for Norco (no documented dose). On January 14, 2015 the Utilization Review denied certification for Norco (no documented dose). Citations used in the decision process were the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS), Chronic Pain Guidelines.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, specific drug list. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain (Chronic)

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 11, 74-96.

**Decision rationale:** Norco is the compounded medication containing hydrocodone and acetaminophen. Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that opioids are not recommended as a first line therapy. Opioid should be part of a treatment plan specific for the patient and should follow criteria for use. Criteria for use include establishment of a treatment plan, determination if pain is nociceptive or neuropathic, failure of pain relief with non-opioid analgesics, setting of specific functional goals, and opioid contract with agreement for random drug testing. If analgesia is not obtained, opioids should be discontinued. The patient should be screened for likelihood that he or she could be weaned from the opioids if there is no improvement in pain or function. It is recommended for short term use if first-line options, such as acetaminophen or NSAIDS have failed. Opioids may be a safer choice for patients with cardiac and renal disease than antidepressants or anticonvulsants. Acetaminophen is recommended for treatment of chronic pain & acute exacerbations of chronic pain. Acetaminophen overdose is a well-known cause of acute liver failure. Hepatotoxicity from therapeutic doses is unusual. Renal insufficiency occurs in 1 to 2% of patients with overdose. The recommended dose for mild to moderate pain is 650 to 1000 mg orally every 4 hours with a maximum of 4 g/day. In this case the patient is using the Norco once daily at bedtime to facilitate sleep. Norco is not indicated as a sleep aid. In addition there is no documentation that the patient has signed an opioid contract or is participating in urine drug testing. Criteria for long-term opioid use have not been met. The request should not be authorized.