

Case Number:	CM15-0113684		
Date Assigned:	06/16/2015	Date of Injury:	05/22/2009
Decision Date:	07/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/04/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/05/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Pain Management

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 52 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 05/22/2009. She has reported subsequent neck, low back and right knee pain and was diagnosed with L5-S1 degenerative disc disease, L4-L5 annular tear, status post L4-S1 anterior posterior fusion on 11/28/2012, right knee degenerative joint disease and chondromalacia, status post medial and lateral meniscectomy of the right knee with chondroplasty on 10/27/2014 and cervical spine C3-C7 disc degeneration. Treatment to date has included oral pain medication, Synvisc injection of the right knee. In a progress note dated 05/22/2015, the injured worker complained of low back and right knee pain rated as 9-10/10 without medication and 7-8/10 with medication. Objective findings were notable for tenderness to palpation of the paravertebral muscles of the lumbar spine bilaterally, tenderness of the sciatic notches, decreased lumbar range of motion, palpable tenderness over the medial joint line, medial fat pad and medial tibial plateau on the right knee, medial effusion of the right knee and decreased range of motion. A request for authorization of Norco was submitted.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 5/325mg quantity 45: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 79, 80, 88,127.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 75-80.

Decision rationale: Norco is a hydrocodone/APAP opioid combination drug. With regard to this request, the California Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state the following about on- going management with opioids: "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 nonadherent) 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 for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs." Guidelines further recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improvement in function and reduction in pain. In the progress reports available for review, the requesting provider did not adequately document monitoring of the four domains. Improvement in function was not clearly outlined. The MTUS defines this as a clinical significant improvement in activities of daily living or a reduction in work restrictions. In this regard, the patient is noted to have stopped working since 2009, and require assistance with ADLs. Her son assists her with some dressing functions. It is unclear what functional benefit Norco is providing. Based on the lack of documentation, medical necessity of this request cannot be established at this time. Although this opioid is not medically necessary at this time, it should not be abruptly halted, and the requesting provider should start a weaning schedule as he or she sees fit or supply the requisite monitoring documentation to continue this medication.