

Case Number:	CM15-0114673		
Date Assigned:	06/22/2015	Date of Injury:	02/25/2002
Decision Date:	07/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/10/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/15/2015

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, 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 63 year old, male who sustained a work related injury on 2/25/02. The diagnoses have included spasm of muscle, cervical pain, hip degenerative joint disease, knee pain and lumbar degenerative disc disease. Treatments have included right hip injections, failed activity modification, failed physical therapy, failed NSAIDs and Tylenol, oral medications and Fentanyl patches. In the PR-2 dated 5/28/15, the injured worker complains of neck and low back pain. He rates his pain level a 5/10 with medications and a 10/10 without medications. He has restricted range of motion in his cervical spine with flexion and extension limited to 30 degrees by pain. He has decreased range of motion in his lumbar spine. Flexion is limited to 45 degrees by pain. He has tenderness to palpation of lumbar paravertebral muscles on both sides. He has restricted range of motion with pain with anteversion of the right hip. He has tenderness noted over the groin and trochanter. He has tenderness to palpation noted over medial and lateral joint lines of right knee. He has a mild effusion in the right knee joint. The treatment plan includes a refill prescription for Norco.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #180: 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's 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 improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg #180 is not medically necessary.