

Case Number:	CM15-0115451		
Date Assigned:	06/29/2015	Date of Injury:	09/28/2013
Decision Date:	08/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/16/2015

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 (IW) is a 41-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 09/28/2013 due to a fall. Diagnoses include left hip sprain/strain, left knee sprain/strain, rule out internal derangement; lumbar sprain/strain; and severe left ankle sprain/strain, status post left ankle surgery (8/20/14). Treatment to date has included medication, home exercise program, ankle surgery, left hip steroid injection, elevation and ice application. According to the progress notes dated 5/26/15, the IW reported continued back pain symptoms and discomfort in the hip. On examination, the left hip was tender laterally with negative acetabular crush and apprehension. Range of motion of the lumbar spine: flexion 80 degrees, extension 10 degrees, and bilateral bending 20 degrees with negative straight leg raise. FABER test was negative. Tenderness was present in the paraspinal muscles, greater on the left. There was also tenderness in the left knee joint line with negative McMurray's sign. The knee was stable to valgus and varus stress. Drawer's sign was negative in the left knee and the ankle. Muscle strength was 5-/5 in the left lower extremity. Left knee and left hip x-rays on 2/10/15 were normal. A request was made for Norco tab 10-325mg, #60 for severe pain.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325mg #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, criteria for use.

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 evidence of return to work or improvement of activity of daily living. Therefore, the prescription of Norco 10/325mg #60 is not medically necessary.