

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0115701		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	06/25/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/16/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	07/27/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	06/15/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	06/17/2015

### 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: Connecticut, California, Virginia  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational 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 51 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 03/16/2011. The mechanism of injury and initial report are not found in the records reviewed. The injured worker was diagnosed as having chronic neck pain; cervical disk protrusion, C5-6; spondylosis; radicular symptoms in both arms; cervical nerve root compression; depression and anxiety; and stress due to worker's compensation difficulties. Treatment to date has included medications, MRI, epidural steroid injections, electromyogram, physical therapy and work restrictions. Currently, the injured worker complains of neck pain radiating down both arms rated at 6-7 /10. The pain is felt more in the right arm. The examination reveals restricted and guarded range of motion of the cervical spine. Spurling's test is positive for pain radiating down the right arm with rotation to the right. Reflexes are depressed at the right biceps, consistent with C5-6 nerve injury. Triceps reflexes are symmetrical. The left carpal has tenderness and allodynia on palpation but has no parenthesis into the fingers. The treatment plan includes medications and continuation of her home exercise program. A request for authorization is made for Norco 10/325mg, #120.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325mg, #120:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, specific drug list: Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen; Opioids, criteria for use; Weaning of Medications.

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

**Decision rationale:** Chronic use of opioids is addressed thoroughly by the MTUS chronic pain guidelines and given the long history of pain in this patient since the initial date of injury, consideration of the MTUS Criteria for Use of Opioids in chronic pain is appropriate. Documentation of pain and functional improvement are critical components, along with documentation of adverse effects. While the MTUS does not specifically detail a set visit frequency for re-evaluation, recommended duration between visits is 1 to 6 months. In this case, the patient clearly warrants close monitoring and treatment, to include close follow up regarding improvement in pain/function; consideration of additional expertise in pain management should be considered if there is no evidence of improvement in the long term. More detailed consideration of long-term treatment goals for pain (specifically aimed at decreased need for opioids), and further elaboration on dosing expectations in this case would be valuable. Consideration of other pain treatment modalities and adjuvants is also recommended. Utilization Review reasonably modified the request to facilitate appropriate weaning. Given the lack of clear evidence to support functional improvement on the medication and the chronic risk of continued treatment, the request for Norco is not considered medically necessary.