MAXIMUS Federal Services

| Case Number: | CM15-0117567 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Date Assigned: | 06/25/2015 | Date of Injury: | 03/04/2005 |
| Decision Date: | 07/27/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 05/28/2015 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 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: 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 53-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 03/04/05. Initial complaints and diagnoses are not available. Treatments to date include medications, back surgery, and spinal cord stimulator placement and removal. Diagnostic studies are not addressed. Current complaints include pain in the neck across the top of her shoulders, and her upper/mid/lower back. Current diagnoses include right shoulder impingement syndrome and tendinosis, lumbosacral sprain, left anterior thigh contusion/abrasion, and right upper extremity chronic regional pain syndrome. In a progress note dated 04/23/15, the treating provider reports the plan of care as medications including Norco. The requested treatment is Norco.

## 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; Steps to Take Before a Therapeutic Trial of Opioids; Opioids: Initiating Therapy; Opioids, screening for risk of addiction (tests) Page(s): 91, 76, 77, 90.

**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 #120 is not medically necessary.