

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0127219		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	07/13/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	12/18/2006
<b>Decision Date:</b>	08/12/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	06/08/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	07/01/2015

### 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 57 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on December 18, 2006. He reported injury to his back. The injured worker was diagnosed as having thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis not otherwise specified, lumbar or lumbosacral disc degeneration, chronic pain due to trauma and skin sensation disturbance. Treatment to date has included diagnostic studies, trigger point injection, exercises, ice and heat application and medications. On June 25, 2015, the injured worker complained of lower back pain rated as a 10 on a 0-10 pain scale. The pain is characterized as aching, burning and sharp with radiation to the right buttock, right hip, right thigh, right leg and right foot. He reported that medications are less effective. The treatment plan included ice and heat application, exercise, medications and a follow-up visit. On June 8, 2015, Utilization Review non-certified the request for Norco 7.5/325 mg #40, citing California MTUS Guidelines.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 7.5/325mg #60:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, On-Going Management, Opioids for chronic pain Page(s): 78, 80.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 44, 47, 75-79, 120 of 127.

**Decision rationale:** Regarding the request for Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen), California Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines state that this is an opiate pain medication. Due to high abuse potential, close follow-up is recommended with documentation of analgesic effect, objective functional improvement, side effects, and discussion regarding any aberrant use. Guidelines go on to recommend discontinuing opioids if there is no documentation of improved function and pain. Within the documentation available for review, there is no indication that the medication is improving the patient's function or pain (in terms of specific examples of functional improvement and percent reduction in pain or reduced NRS) and no discussion regarding aberrant use. As such, there is no clear indication for ongoing use of the medication. Opioids should not be abruptly discontinued, but unfortunately, there is no provision to modify the current request to allow tapering. In light of the above issues, the currently requested Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen) is not medically necessary.