

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0070879		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/20/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	06/29/2000
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/19/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	04/06/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	04/14/2015

### 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 76 year old male injured worker suffered an industrial injury on 06/29/2000. The diagnoses included lumbago, low back pain, and ankle pain in the joint. The injured worker had been treated with medications. On 9/23/2014 the treating provider reported continued pain in the low back and right ankle. The medications are working to decrease his pain and increase functions. The pain is described as ongoing, aching and constant. The right ankle pain is described as throbbing. The ankle had diffuse swelling with tenderness and decreased range of motion. The lumbar spine was tender at the facet joint with reduced range of motion. The pain was rated as 3/10 with medications. The treatment plan included Hydrocodone Acetaminophen.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Hydrocodone Acetaminophen 10/325mg quantity unspecified:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 76; 79.

**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 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. There is copy of a signed opioid contract nor evidence of psychological evaluation of the patient to assess potential misuse/abuse of the drug. Therefore, the prescription of Hydrocodone Acetaminophen 10/325mg quantity unspecified is not medically necessary.