

Case Number:	CM15-0077797		
Date Assigned:	04/30/2015	Date of Injury:	07/17/2000
Decision Date:	06/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/13/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/23/2015

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: Texas, California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 male, who sustained an industrial injury on December 8, 2004. He reported low back pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having failed back syndrome, lumbar degenerative disc disease, lumbago and lumbar radiculopathy. Treatment to date has included radiographic imaging, diagnostic studies, lumbar surgery, psychotherapy, home exercises, lumbar injection, medications and work restrictions. Currently, the injured worker complains of chronic low back pain with radiating pain, tingling and numbness down the left lower extremity. The injured worker reported an industrial injury in 2004, resulting in the above noted pain. He was treated conservatively and surgically without complete resolution of the pain. It was noted that the lumbar epidural steroid injection (LESI) was beneficial in providing temporary relief. He reported requiring medications daily to maintain function. He reported using psychotherapy to try to improve life quality. Evaluation on March 25, 2015, revealed continued pain as noted. It was noted he walked with a severe limp secondary to sciatic pain, He again noted injections were beneficial. Pain medications were requested. The medication list includes Norco, Neurontin, Elavil and Prilosec.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg, 120 count: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines -Opioids, criteria for use: page 76-80Criteria for use of OpioidsTherapeutic Trial of Opioids.

Decision rationale: Norco contains Hydrocodone with APAP which is an opioid analgesic in combination with acetaminophen. According to CA MTUS guidelines cited below, "A therapeutic trial of opioids should not be employed until the patient has failed a trial of non-opioid analgesics. Before initiating therapy, the patient should set goals, and the continued use of opioids should be contingent on meeting these goals". The records provided do not specify that patient has set goals regarding the use of opioid analgesic. A treatment failure with non-opioid analgesics is not specified in the records provided. Other criteria for ongoing management of opioids are: "The lowest possible dose should be prescribed to improve pain and function. Continuing review of the overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control. Ongoing review and documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects. Consider the use of a urine drug screen to assess for the use or the presence of illegal drugs". The records provided do not provide a documentation of response in regards to pain control and functional improvement to opioid analgesic for this patient. The continued review of overall situation with regard to nonopioid means of pain control is not documented in the records provided. As recommended by MTUS a documentation of pain relief, functional status, appropriate medication use, and side effects should be maintained for ongoing management of opioid analgesic, these are not specified in the records provided. MTUS guidelines also recommend urine drug screen to assess for the use or the presence of illegal drugs in patients using opioids for long term. A recent urine drug screen report is not specified in the records provided. Whether improvement in pain translated into objective functional improvement including ability to work is not specified in the records provided. With this, it is deemed that, this patient does not meet criteria for ongoing continued use of opioids analgesic. The request of Norco 10/325 mg, 120 count is not medically necessary and has not been established for this patient.