

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0092601		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	05/19/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	02/03/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	06/24/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	04/28/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	05/13/2015

### 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, Texas, Florida

Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management, Hospice & Palliative 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:

This 31-year-old female sustained an industrial injury on 2/3/14. She subsequently reported knee pain. Diagnoses include degenerative joint disease right knee. Treatments to date include x-ray and MRI testing, physical therapy, surgery and prescription pain medications. The injured worker continues to experience bilateral knee pain. Upon examination, it was noted that the surgical wounds are healing nicely. Mild pitting edema of the left ankle, negative Homans sign and tenderness in the proximal calf was noted. The treating physician made a request for Norco medication.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Norco 10/325 mg #90:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 74.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 9792.20 - 9792.26 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 Norco 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), no documentation regarding side effects, 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.