

Case Number:	CM15-0093882		
Date Assigned:	05/20/2015	Date of Injury:	02/13/2009
Decision Date:	06/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/22/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/15/2015

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:

This is a 54-year-old male patient who sustained an industrial injury on 02/13/2009. The diagnoses included cervical spine degenerative disc disease with bilateral radiculitis, lumbar spine degenerative disc disease with disc bulge, right shoulder partial thickness rotator cuff tear, left shoulder joint arthrosis, right and cubital syndrome, right and left carpal tunnel syndrome and depression. He sustained the injury due to involved in motor vehicle accident. Per the doctor's note dated 4/7/2015, he had complaints of constant pain in the neck that radiated with aching and burning both shoulders and forearms. The pain in the neck radiates to both arms with numbness and tingling. Physical examination revealed cervical spine tenderness with spasms, lumbar spine spasms with tenderness and positive straight leg raise. The medications list includes norco. Patient was also prescribed psychiatric medicines including duloxetine, prazosin, gabapentin, lorazepam and temazepam from behavior medicine department. He has had cervical MRI dated 7/10/2009 and lumbar MRI dated 8/27/14. He has had physical therapy, acupuncture and TENS for this injury.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Norco 10/325 mg #60: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 80-81.

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

Decision rationale: Request: Norco 10/325 mg #60. Norco contains hydrocodone and acetaminophen. Hydrocodone is an opioid analgesic. According to the cited guidelines, "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 that patient has set goals regarding the use of opioid analgesic. The 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 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 objective functional improvement to opioid analgesic for this patient. The continued review of the overall situation with regard to non-opioid means of pain control is not documented in the records provided. As recommended by the cited guidelines 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. Response to lower potency opioid for chronic pain is not specified in the records provided. A recent urine drug screen report is not specified in the records provided. This patient does not meet criteria for ongoing continued use of opioids analgesic. The medical necessity of Norco 10/325mg, #60 is not established for this patient.