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| <b>Case Number:</b>   | CM15-0097237 |                              |            |
| <b>Date Assigned:</b> | 05/27/2015   | <b>Date of Injury:</b>       | 11/04/2014 |
| <b>Decision Date:</b> | 06/25/2015   | <b>UR Denial Date:</b>       | 05/08/2015 |
| <b>Priority:</b>      | Standard     | <b>Application Received:</b> | 05/20/2015 |

### 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

### 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 41 year old male injured worker suffered an industrial injury on 11/04/2014. The diagnoses included thoracic back pain and neck strain/sprain. The diagnostics included lumbosacral x-rays. The injured worker had been treated with medications, physical therapy and chiropractic therapy. On 4/13/2015, the treating provider reported neck and upper back pain. The neck pain was moderate to severe that was constant and sharp. The upper back pain was moderate to severe that was constant and sharp. The treatment plan included Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen and Naproxen.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen 5/325mg #30 for the neck: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Prescription opioid analgesics rapidly change the human brain. Pain. Aug 2011;152 (8): 1803-10.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids, page(s) 74-96.

**Decision rationale:** Per the MTUS Guidelines cited, opioid use in the setting of chronic, non-malignant, or neuropathic pain is controversial. Patients on opioids should be routinely monitored for signs of impairment and use of opioids in patients with chronic pain should be reserved for those with improved functional outcomes attributable to their use, in the context of an overall approach to pain management that also includes non-opioid analgesics, adjuvant therapies, psychological support, and active treatments (e.g., exercise). Submitted documents show no evidence that the treating physician is prescribing opioids in accordance to change in pain relief, functional goals with demonstrated improvement in daily activities, decreased in medical utilization or change in functional status. There is no evidence presented of random drug testing or utilization of pain contract to adequately monitor for narcotic safety, efficacy, and compliance. The MTUS provides requirements of the treating physician to assess and document for functional improvement with treatment intervention and maintenance of function that would otherwise deteriorate if not supported. From the submitted reports, there is no demonstrated evidence of specific functional benefit derived from the continuing use of opioids with persistent severe pain for this chronic injury without acute flare, new injury, or progressive deterioration. The Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen 5/325mg #30 for the neck is not medically necessary or appropriate.

**Naproxen 550mg #60 for the neck:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), Page 22.

**Decision rationale:** Anti-inflammatories are the traditional first line of treatment, to reduce pain so activity and functional restoration can resume, but long-term use may not be warranted. Monitoring of NSAIDs functional benefit is advised as per Guidelines, long-term use of NSAIDS beyond a few weeks may actually retard muscle and connective tissue healing and increase the risk of hip fractures. Available reports submitted have not adequately addressed the indication to continue a NSAID for a chronic injury nor have they demonstrated any functional efficacy derived from treatment already rendered. The Naproxen 550mg #60 for the neck is not medically necessary or appropriate.