

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0126848		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	08/13/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	10/06/2005
<b>Decision Date:</b>	09/11/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/05/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/11/2014

### 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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Emergency Medicine and is licensed to practice in New York. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

### 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 patient is a year-old female who was injured on October 6, 2005. The patient continued to experience low back pain. Physical examination was notable for tenderness to palpation at level L4/5 with paraspinal muscle tenderness, and normal muscle tone without atrophy of all extremities. An MRI of the lumbar spine performed on 6/29/09 reported multilevel disc bulges, unchanged from MRI performed on 3/7/07. Diagnoses included lumbar disc displacement without myelopathy. Treatment included cognitive behavioral therapy, epidural steroid injections, TENS unit, medications, and home exercise program. Request for authorization for MRI of the lumbar spine was submitted for consideration.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**MRI of the lumbar spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Treatment in Workers Compensation (TWC), Low Back Procedure Summary (updated 07/03/2014).

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) < Low Back-Lumbar and Thoracic: MRI's.

**Decision rationale:** Imaging of the lumbosacral spine is indicated in patients with unequivocal objective findings that identify specific nerve compromise on the neurologic examination who do not respond to treatment and who would consider surgery an option. When the neurologic examination is less clear, however, further physiologic evidence of nerve dysfunction should be obtained before ordering an imaging study. Indiscriminant imaging will result in false-positive findings, such as disk bulges, that are not the source of painful symptoms and do not warrant surgery. Further investigation is indicated in patients with history of tumor, infection, abdominal aneurysm, or other related serious conditions, who have positive findings on examination. MRI of the spine is recommended for indications below. The MRI's are test of choice for patients with prior back surgery. An MRI of the lumbar spine for uncomplicated low back pain, with radiculopathy, is not recommended until after at least one month conservative therapy, sooner if severe or progressive neurologic deficit. Repeat MRI is not routinely recommended, and should be reserved for a significant change in symptoms and/or findings suggestive of significant pathology (eg, tumor, infection, fracture, neurocompression, and recurrent disc herniation).  
Indications for imaging -- Magnetic resonance imaging: Thoracic spine trauma: with neurological deficit, Lumbar spine trauma: trauma, neurological deficit, Lumbar spine trauma: seat belt (chance) fracture (If focal, radicular findings or other neurologic deficit), Uncomplicated low back pain, suspicion of cancer, infection, other "red flags", Uncomplicated low back pain, with radiculopathy, after at least 1 month conservative therapy, sooner if severe or progressive neurologic deficit, Uncomplicated low back pain, prior lumbar surgery, Uncomplicated low back pain, cauda equina syndrome, Myelopathy (neurological deficit related to the spinal cord), traumatic, Myelopathy, painful, Myelopathy, sudden onset, Myelopathy, stepwise progressive, Myelopathy, slowly progressive, Myelopathy, infectious disease patient, Myelopathy, oncology patient. In this case there is no documentation that the patient has experienced a change in his symptoms or new neurologic deficit. There is no indication for repeat MRI. The request should not be authorized.