

Case Number:	CM14-0038211		
Date Assigned:	06/25/2014	Date of Injury:	06/17/2001
Decision Date:	08/05/2014	UR Denial Date:	03/04/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/01/2014

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 Neurological Surgery and is licensed to practice in Texas. 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 injured worker is a 60 year old female who sustained an injury on 06/17/01 when she was picking up heavy objects. The injured worker developed complaints of low back pain radiating to the left lower extremity. Prior conservative treatment included multiple medications including analgesics, muscle relaxers, and neuropathic medications. The injured worker had several epidural steroid injections with up to one month relief of symptoms. Magnetic resonance imaging from 11/18/13 noted degenerative disc disease at L5-S1 with a 3-4mm disc protrusion contributing to mild central canal stenosis. There was contact of the descending nerve roots within the lateral recesses and in foraminal nerve root abutment more pronounced to the left side than the right. The injured worker was seen on 02/21/14 for continuing complaints of low back pain radiating to the left lower extremity. The injured worker was utilizing gabapentin and lidocaine patches for neuropathic symptoms which were beneficial. The injured worker did not describe any pain radiating below the left knee and at the left lower extremity. There was no indication of any further numbness and tingling in the left foot. Physical examination noted intact strength in the lower extremities without sensory deficits or reflex changes. The injured worker was recommended for percutaneous discectomy to the left at L5-S1. This request was denied by utilization review on 03/04/14.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Percutaneous Discectomy at left L5-S1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Low Back Chapter Percutaneous Discectomy (PCD).

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back Chapter, Percutaneous Discectomy.

Decision rationale: In review of the physical examination findings, there was no evidence of any motor weakness sensory deficit or reflex changes indicative of a left L5-S1 radiculopathy. Although imaging studies noted degenerative disc disease at L5-S1, the findings were bilateral. There was no correlating finding on physical examination to support surgical intervention as outlined by guidelines. Furthermore guidelines do not recommend the use of percutaneous discectomy as there is insufficient evidence within the clinical literature establishing the efficacy of this procedure as compared to standard microdiscectomy procedures. Given the lack of recommendations for the procedure in the current evidence based guidelines and lack of objective findings consistent with left L5-S1 radiculopathy, this reviewer would not have recommended this request as medically necessary.