

Case Number:	CM14-0048216		
Date Assigned:	07/02/2014	Date of Injury:	12/06/2012
Decision Date:	02/25/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/02/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/16/2014

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. 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: New York, Tennessee
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Emergency 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:

The patient is a 54-year-old male who was injured on December 6, 2012. The patient continued to experience pain in his low back and both legs. Physical examination was notable for antalgic gait, pain to palpation L4-5 and L5-S1, mildly decreased strength of the left gastrocnemius and extensor hallucis longus, and diminished sensation over the L5 and S1 distributions. MRI of the lumbar spine done on June 7, 2013 showed severe left foraminal stenosis at L4-5 and L5-S1 with disc protrusions and facet hypertrophy. Diagnoses included lumbar strain, lumbar radiculopathy, and sciatica. Treatment included medications, physical therapy, chiropractic injections, surgery, and epidural steroid injection. Request for authorization for MRI 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 Lumbar Spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

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: Per guidelines, 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. MRI's are test of choice for patients with prior back surgery. 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 (e.g., tumor, infection, fracture, neurocompression, 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, the documentation does not support the presence of red flags. The patient has had increase in pain but has not had at least one month of conservative therapy. Physical findings have not changed significantly from prior physical examinations. There is no indication for MRI of the lumbar spine. The request is not medically necessary.