

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0005962		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	01/29/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/22/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	03/18/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	12/23/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	01/12/2015

### 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: New Jersey, Michigan, California  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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:

This 38 year old man sustained an industrial injury on 9/22/2014 due to a motor vehicle accident. Current diagnoses include cervical strain with C4-C5, C5-C6 and C6-C7 cervical disc protrusions with severe post traumatic cervical headaches and lumbar strain with associated lumbar facet syndrome. Treatment has included oral medications, three epidural steroid injections, home exercise program, and physical therapy. Physician notes dated 11/25/2014 show continued complaints of pain to the neck and lumbar spine. Recommendations include continuing follow up with neurology for head injury, awaiting approval for MRI of the lumbar spine, continue with orthopedic specialist for care of the neck and back, and continue home exercise program. It is noted that the worker is approaching a maximum medical improvement date of 11/28/2014. On 12/23/2014, Utilization Review evaluated a prescription for MRI without contrast of the lumbar spine, that was submitted on 1/12/2015. The UR physician noted there were no focal neurological deficient and no radicular symptoms. The MTUS, ACOEM Guidelines, (or ODG) was cited. The request was denied and subsequently appealed to Independent Medical Review.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**MRI without contrast of the lumbar spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303.

**Decision rationale:** Regarding the indications for imaging in case of back pain, MTUS guidelines stated:< Lumbar spine x rays should not be recommended in patients with low back pain in the absence of red flags for serious spinal pathology, even if the pain has persisted for at least six weeks. However, it may be appropriate when the physician believes it would aid in patient management. Unequivocal objective findings that identify specific nerve compromise on the neurologic examination are sufficient evidence to warrant imaging in patients 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. Indiscriminate imaging will result in false-positive findings, such as disk bulges, that are not the source of painful symptoms and do not warrant surgery. If physiologic evidence indicates tissue insult or nerve impairment, the practitioner can discuss with a consultant the selection of an imaging test to define a potential cause (magnetic resonance imaging [MRI] for neural or other soft tissue, computer tomography [CT] for bony structures)>. Furthermore, and according to MTUS guidelines, MRI is the test of choice for patients with prior back surgery, fracture or tumors that may require surgery. The patient does not have any clear evidence of lumbar radiculopathy or nerve root compromise. There is no change in the patient signs or symptoms suggestive of new pathology. Therefore, the request for MRI of the lumbar spine without contrast is not medically necessary.