

Case Number:	CM15-0108720		
Date Assigned:	06/15/2015	Date of Injury:	02/06/2007
Decision Date:	07/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/14/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/05/2015

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, Alabama, 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:

The injured worker is a 62-year-old male with an industrial injury dated 02/06/2007 resulting in injuries to his back, bilateral elbows, upper extremities and bilateral knees. His diagnoses included lumbago, lumbar spine stenosis and sciatica. Prior treatment included acupuncture, medications, home exercise program and pain management. He presents on 05/01/2015 for follow up evaluation regarding injuries sustained in the workplace on 02/06/2007. He rated his pain as 6/10. Prior office visit dated 03/13/2015 the injured worker had a pain rating as 7/10. He states he utilizes his medication (Norco) and gets significant improvement of his overall symptomatology. Physical exam revealed tenderness over the right lateral lumbar region and over the palpation over the spinous process of lumbar 4-5. The provider documents he is requesting MRI of the lumbar spine in lieu of the injured worker being evaluated by a pain management specialist in order to provide the injured worker with perspectives of possible epidural spinal injections. It is felt his symptomatology has somewhat worsened despite utilization of narcotic level medications. His last MRI was done in August 2009. The request is for Lumbar spine MRI.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lumbar Spine MRI: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287.

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. 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. 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 of the clinical examination that justifies the prescription of MRI. There is no change in the patient signs or symptoms suggestive of new pathology. Therefore, the request for MRI of the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.