

Case Number:	CM15-0136298		
Date Assigned:	07/24/2015	Date of Injury:	12/02/2010
Decision Date:	08/20/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/11/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/14/2015

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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 was a 56-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury, December 2, 2010. The injury was sustained when the injured worker slipped and fell inuring the back and both knees. The injured worker previously received the following treatments right total knee replacement, EMG/NCS (electro diagnostic studies and nerve conduction studies) of the bilateral lower extremities which showed Left S1 radiculopathy and mild bilateral tibial neuropathy, non- localized on December 30, 2014, lumbar spine MRI without contrast on August 12, 2014 which showed straightening of the lumbar lordosis and diffuse disc desiccation, 4mm broad base disc bulge at L3-L4, bilateral facet hypertrophy and mild broad based disc bulge of L4-L5 with mild bilateral facet hypertrophy and broad base disc bulge at L5-S1 with mild to moderate bilateral foraminal narrowing, bilateral wrist splints, Tramadol, Hydrocodone, Soma and Flexeril. The injured worker was diagnosed with lumbar radiculopathy, bilateral severe carpal tunnel syndrome, spinal stenosis, peripheral neuropathy, left L radiculopathy, Hallux rigidus of the left foot and end stage arthritis of the left knee. According to progress note of May 27, 2015, the injured worker's chief complaint was low back pain with increased stiffness and difficulty walking and pain especially when standing. The back noted reversal of the lordosis. There was severe tenderness throughout the paraspinal area. There was almost 0 extension, flexion was ok, and the lateral bending was 10 degrees. The straight leg raises were positive bilaterally. The treatment plan included lumbar spine MRI without contrast.

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 without contrast: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303-304, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: The ACOEM chapter on low back complaints and special diagnostic studies states: 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, computed tomography [CT] for bony structures). Relying solely on imaging studies to evaluate the source of low back and related symptoms carries a significant risk of diagnostic confusion (false positive test results) because of the possibility of identifying a finding that was present before symptoms began and therefore has no temporal association with the symptoms. Techniques vary in their abilities to define abnormalities (Table 12-7). Imaging studies should be reserved for cases in which surgery is considered or red-flag diagnoses are being evaluated. Because the overall false-positive rate is 30% for imaging studies in patients over age 30 who do not have symptoms, the risk of diagnostic confusion is great. There is no recorded presence of emerging red flags on the physical exam. There is evidence of nerve compromise on physical exam but there is not mention of consideration for surgery or complete failure of conservative therapy. For these reasons, criteria for imaging as defined above per the ACOEM have not been met. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary. There is no recorded presence of emerging red flags on the physical exam. There is evidence of nerve compromise on physical exam but there is not mention of consideration for surgery or complete failure of conservative therapy. For these reasons, criteria for imaging as defined above per the ACOEM have not been met. Therefore the request is not certified.