

Case Number:	CM15-0136536		
Date Assigned:	07/24/2015	Date of Injury:	11/16/2010
Decision Date:	08/21/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/08/2015
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 is a 67 year old male with an industrial injury dated 11/16/2010. The injured worker's diagnoses include cervicalgia, cervical disc displacement, and status post C6-7 anterior cervical decompression and interbody fusion. Treatment consisted of diagnostic studies, prescribed medications, and periodic follow up visits. In a progress note dated 05/12/2015, the injured worker reported left sided neck pain and increasing numbness in the right hand, and weakness in his right grip. Objective findings revealed mild tenderness over the left paracervical region, give way weakness in the right arm, and decreased sensation in the C6 and C7 dermatomes on the right. The treating physician prescribed services for Electromyography (EMG)/Nerve conduction velocity (NCV) of right upper extremity to evaluate the injured worker continued complaints of numbness, tingling and weakness in the right hand.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

EMG/NCV of right upper extremity: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 11 Forearm, Wrist, and Hand Complaints Page(s): 178-179.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 173-174.

Decision rationale: The ACOEM chapter on neck and upper back complaints and special diagnostic studies states: Criteria for ordering imaging studies are: Emergence of a red flag; Physiologic evidence of tissue insult or neurologic dysfunction; Failure to progress in a strengthening program intended to avoid surgery; Clarification of the anatomy prior to an invasive procedure; Physiologic evidence may be in the form of definitive neurologic findings on physical examination, electro diagnostic studies, laboratory tests, or bone scans. Unequivocal findings that identify specific nerve compromise on the neurologic examination are sufficient evidence to warrant imaging studies if symptoms persist. When the neurologic examination is less clear, however, further physiologic evidence of nerve dysfunction can be obtained before ordering an imaging study. Electromyography (EMG), and nerve conduction velocities (NCV), including H-reflex tests, may help identify subtle focal neurologic dysfunction in patients with neck or arm symptoms, or both, lasting more than three or four weeks. The assessment may include sensory-evoked potentials (SEPs) if spinal stenosis or spinal cord myelopathy is suspected. If physiologic evidence indicates tissue insult or nerve impairment, consider a discussion with a consultant regarding next steps, including the selection of an imaging test to define a potential cause (magnetic resonance imaging [MRI] for neural or other soft tissue, compute tomography [CT] for bony structures). Additional studies may be considered to further define problem areas. The recent evidence indicates cervical disk annular tears may be missed on MRIs. The clinical significance of such a finding is unclear, as it may not correlate temporally or anatomically with symptoms. The provided documentation does not show any signs of emergence of red flags. There is evidence of neurologic dysfunction on exam. There is no mention of planned invasive procedures. There are no subtle neurologic findings listed on the physical exam. Conservative treatment has not been exhausted. For these reasons criteria for special diagnostic testing has not been met per the ACOEM. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.