

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0139715		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	07/29/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/23/2010
<b>Decision Date:</b>	08/26/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	06/24/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	07/20/2015

### 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:

This injured worker is a 63 year old male who reported an industrial injury on 9-23-2010. His diagnoses, and or impression, were noted to include: cervical disc herniation; lumbar degenerative disc disease with radiculopathy, and status-post lumbar surgery; and opioid-type dependence. Recent magnetic imaging studies of the cervical spine were noted on 2-12-2015; x-rays of the lumbar spine were noted on 12-14-2014. His treatments were noted to include lumbar spine surgery; physical therapy for the lumbar spine; cervical epidural steroid injection (5-18-15) effective; medication management; and modified work duties. The progress notes of 6-12-2015 noted a cervical epidural steroid injection follow-up visit with reports of significant relief in his neck and shoulder pain that was rated to then be mild; and that he was very happy with the results. Objective findings were noted to include a healed lumbar spine wound, and limited lumbar flexion. The physician's requests for treatments were noted to include a computed tomography scan of the lumbar spine to confirm that the fusion site had developed a bony bridge.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Computed tomography scan 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, Low Back, CT (computed tomography).

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303-304.

**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.