

Case Number:	CM15-0141838		
Date Assigned:	07/31/2015	Date of Injury:	11/06/2009
Decision Date:	08/31/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/24/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/21/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Pain Management

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 43 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 11/06/2009. Mechanism of injury occurred over years at his job. Diagnoses include chronic cervical trapezial musculoligamentous sprain and strain-resolved and lumbar discopathy oat L4-L5 and L5-S1 with bilateral neuroforaminal narrowing per Magnetic Resonance Imaging dated 05-17-2010, and retrolisthesis at L5-S1. Treatment to date has included diagnostic studies, medications, epidural injections, acupuncture, and physical therapy. On 05-17-2010 an unofficial report of the lumbar spine revealed L4-5 moderate bilateral neural foraminal narrowing secondary to a 2-3 mm posterior disc bulge. At L5-S1 there is moderate to severe right and mild to moderate left neural foraminal narrowing secondary to a 2-3 mm posterior disc bulge. His medications include Norco and anti-inflammatory medications. A physician progress note dated 06/03/2015 documents the injured worker complains of low back pain, which he rates as 8 to 10. He has difficulty with activities of daily living due to the pain and is only able to sleep about 5-6 hours a night. He has a slight slow steady gait. He has lumbar spine spasms and has tenderness on palpation over the lumbar spinous process of the L4-L5. There is a positive straight leg raise with pain bilaterally on 30 degrees of extension of the leg in both the seated and supine position. He has decreased sensation in the bilateral legs in five regions. Lumbar range of motion is restricted. Treatment requested is for a Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the lumbar spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI 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 (ODG), low back, MRIs.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303-304. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back Chapter, MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging).

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for repeat lumbar MRI, Occupational Medicine Practice Guidelines state that 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 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. ODG states that MRIs are recommended for uncomplicated low back pain with radiculopathy after at least one month of conservative therapy. Repeat MRI is not routinely recommended, and should be reserved for a significant change in symptoms and/or findings suggestive of significant pathology. Within the documentation available for review, there is no statement indicating what medical decision-making will be based upon the outcome of the currently requested MRI. Furthermore, there is no documentation indicating how the patient's subjective complaints and objective findings have changed since the time of the most recent MRI of the lumbar spine. In the absence of clarity regarding those issues, the currently requested lumbar MRI is not medically necessary.