

Case Number:	CM15-0163946		
Date Assigned:	09/01/2015	Date of Injury:	10/23/2003
Decision Date:	09/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/20/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/20/2015

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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & General Preventive 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, who sustained an industrial injury on 10-23-2003. The mechanism of injury is unknown. The injured worker was diagnosed as having a lumbar anterior and posterior fusion, chronic radiculopathy and low back pain. There is no record of a recent diagnostic study. Treatment to date has included surgery, physical therapy, chiropractic care, aqua therapy, spinal cord stimulator and medication management. In a progress note dated 7-7-2015, the injured worker complains of back pain that radiated to the bilateral lower extremities- left greater than right- rated 3-5 out of 10 with medications and 7-8 out of 10 without medications. Physical examination showed decreased lumbar range of motion and pain in the lumbosacral area, ischium and sacral notch. The treating physician is requesting lumbar magnetic resonance imaging.

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: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation

Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-315. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging).

Decision rationale: MTUS and ACOEM recommend MRI, in general, for low back pain when "cauda equine, tumor, infection, or fracture are strongly suspected and plain film radiographs are negative, MRI test of choice for patients with prior back surgery" ACOEM additionally recommends against MRI for low back pain "before 1 month in absence of red flags". ODG states, "Imaging is indicated only if they have severe progressive neurologic impairments or signs or symptoms indicating a serious or specific underlying condition, or if they are candidates for invasive interventions. Immediate imaging is recommended for patients with major risk factors for cancer, spinal infection, cauda equina syndrome, or severe or progressive neurologic deficits. Imaging after a trial of treatment is recommended for patients who have minor risk factors for cancer, inflammatory back disease, vertebral compression fracture, radiculopathy, or symptomatic spinal stenosis. Subsequent imaging should be based on new symptoms or changes in current symptoms." The medical notes provided did not document (physical exam, objective testing, or subjective complaints) any red flags, significant worsening in symptoms or other findings suggestive of the pathologies outlined in the above guidelines. This patient had a CT in 2013, there is no documentation in objective findings or subjective complaints to warrant additional testing. As such, the request for MRI of the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.