

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0165485		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/03/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/06/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/06/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	07/25/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/24/2015

### 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, Indiana, New York  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal 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 52 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 3-06-2013. Diagnoses include bilateral hip strain rule out internal derangement left worse than right, lumbar radiculopathy left greater than right, cervical strain with left sided radiculopathy and radiculitis, bilateral wrist tendinitis with bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome, bilateral elbow tendinitis with medial and lateral cubital tunnel syndrome, bilateral shoulder impingement and strain left worse than right, left knee pain rule out internal derangement and left thigh pain. Treatment to date has included diagnostics, activity modification, work restrictions and oral and topical medications. Electrodiagnostic testing dated 3-27-2014 showed slight bilateral carpal tunnel and slight to moderate bilateral cubital tunnel syndrome with no cervical radiculopathy. Per the Primary Treating Physician's Progress Report dated 7-02-2015, the injured worker reported persistent symptoms despite conservative care. He currently reports left knee pain which is not getting any better. He has increased numbness and tingling of the left upper extremity. He also reported bilateral hip pain, bilateral shoulder pain, bilateral wrist pain, bilateral elbow and forearm pain, low back pain, neck pain and upper back pain. Physical examination of the cervical spine revealed muscle spasm and tenderness upon palpation of the paravertebral muscles, on the left more than right. Spurling's sign was positive on the left causing upper scapular pain. Ranges of motion were restricted. Work status was temporarily totally disabled. He was unable to do modified work. The plan of care included consultations and diagnostics. Authorization was requested for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the cervical spine.

## IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**MRI of the cervical spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Neck and Upper Back, Chapter, MRI.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 178. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck section, MRI cervical spine.

**Decision rationale:** Pursuant to the ACOEM and the Official Disability Guidelines, MRI cervical spine is not medically necessary. ACOEM states unequivocal objective findings that identify specific nerve compromise on the neurologic examination are sufficient evidence to warrant imaging in patients not respond to treatment and who would consider surgery an option. Patients who are alert, have never lost consciousness, are not under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, have no distracting injuries, have no cervical tenderness with no neurologic findings do not need imaging. Patients who do not fall into this category should have a three view cervical radiographic series followed by a computer tomography (CT). The indications for imaging are enumerated in the Official Disability Guidelines. Indications include, but are not limited to, chronic neck pain (after three months conservative treatment), radiographs normal neurologic signs or symptoms present; neck pain with radiculopathy if severe or progressive neurologic deficit; etc. Repeat MRI is not routinely recommended and should be reserved for a significant change in symptoms and/or findings suggestive of significant pathology (e.g., tumor, infection, fracture, neurocompression, recurrent disc herniation). The criteria for ordering an MRI of the cervical spine include the emergence of a red flag, physiologic evidence of tissue insult when nerve impairment, failure to progress in a strengthening program intended to avoid surgery and clarification of anatomy prior to surgery. In this case, the injured worker's relevant working diagnoses as they apply to the issue are cervical strain with left sided radiculitis and radiculopathy: bilateral shoulder impingement and strain, left greater than right. The date of injury is March 6, 2013. Request for authorization is July 16, 2015. According to a July 2, 2015 progress note, the injured worker has multiple complaints including neck pain and back pain, left knee pain, bilateral hip, shoulder, wrist, elbow and forearm pain. Objectively, there is no cervical or upper extremity neurologic evaluation. There are no unequivocal objective findings that identify specific nerve compromise. Additionally, the discussion section references a prior cervical magnetic resonance imaging scan. The results of that scan are not documented in the medical record. There was no hard copy of the cervical MRI scan done previously. Repeat MRI is not routinely recommended and should be reserved for a significant change in symptoms and/or findings suggestive of significant pathology (e.g., tumor, infection, fracture, neurocompression, recurrent disc herniation). There is no documentation of a significant change in clinical symptoms and/or objective findings suggestive of significant pathology. Based on the clinical information the medical record, peer-reviewed evidence-based guidelines, no documentation of the prior magnetic resonance imaging cervical spine, no documentation of a significant change in symptoms and/or objective findings suggestive of significant pathology and no neurologic evaluation of the cervical spine and upper extremities, MRI cervical spine is not medically necessary.