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| <b>Case Number:</b>   | CM15-0165518 |                              |            |
| <b>Date Assigned:</b> | 09/03/2015   | <b>Date of Injury:</b>       | 06/18/2015 |
| <b>Decision Date:</b> | 10/06/2015   | <b>UR Denial Date:</b>       | 07/29/2015 |
| <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: 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 34 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on June 18, 2015. She reported an injury to her low back. Her past medical history is significant for previous cervical spine fusion and lumbar partial discectomies, Treatment to date has included steroid medications, NSAIDS, modified activities, topical pain medications, TENS unit, and ice-heat therapy. Currently, the injured worker complains of intermittent to frequent low back pain which is moderate to severe in intensity. She reports that she has occasional to intermittent radiation of pain to the left buttock and thigh. She notes that her pain is aggravated by with repeated bending and twisting. She has been using Tens unit, NSAIDS, heat-ice therapy and topical pain medications to relieve her pain. On physical examination the injured worker has guarded movements. She has tenderness to palpation over the sacroiliac joint and sciatic notches and has positive straight leg raise. She has moderately limited pain and guarding with trunk range of motion. Her lower extremity sensation and strength is intact. The diagnosis associated with the request is low back pain with persistent radiculitis, and low back strain. The treatment plan includes Toradol injection, physical therapy of the lumbar spine to restore function and strength, modified work duties, and MRI 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 of lumbosacral spine with and without contrast: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints.

**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.