

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0167439		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/08/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	07/11/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/07/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	07/25/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/25/2015

### 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: New Jersey, Alabama, California  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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 31-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 7-11-13. She had complaints of low back pain. She was diagnosed with lumbosacral radiculitis. Diagnostics include x-ray and MRI. Treatments include medication, injections, pool therapy and physical therapy. Progress report dated 7-15-15 reports complaints of ongoing worsening low back pain with radiation to bilateral lower extremities with numbness and tingling. Her legs feel restless. Home exercises and swimming help to relieve the pain. Diagnoses include moderate disc herniation at L5-S1, lumbar facet syndrome, recurrent lumbosacral sprain with radicular symptoms and right sacroiliac joint dysfunction. Plan of care includes: request EMG nerve conduction studies lower extremities, request MRI lumbar spine and request Butrans patch for pain control. Work status: permanent and stationary. Follow up as needed.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), Lumbar spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines: Low Back.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Special Studies and Diagnostic and Treatment Consideration Page(s): 303.

**Decision rationale:** Regarding the indications for imaging in case of back pain, MTUS guidelines stated: Lumbar spine x rays should not be recommended in patients with low back pain in the absence of red flags for serious spinal pathology, even if the pain has persisted for at least six weeks. However, it may be appropriate when the physician believes it would aid in patient management. 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, computer tomography [CT] for bony structures). Furthermore, and according to MTUS guidelines, MRI is the test of choice for patients with prior back surgery, fracture or tumors that may require surgery. The patient does not have any clear evidence of new lumbar nerve root compromise. There is no clear evidence of significant change in the patient's signs or symptoms, since her last lumbar suggestive of new pathology. Therefore, the request for MRI of the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.