

Case Number:	CM15-0183891		
Date Assigned:	09/24/2015	Date of Injury:	04/21/2014
Decision Date:	10/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/27/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/18/2015

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: Montana, Oregon, Idaho
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Orthopedic Surgery

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 42 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 4-21-2014. The medical records indicate that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for lumbar sprain-strain and lumbar radiculopathy. According to the progress report dated 8-11-2015, the injured worker presented with complaints of dull, aching low back pain. His low back pain is associated with radiating pain, numbness, and tingling into his bilateral lower extremities, more on the right side. The pain is aggravated by activities such as back bending and lifting. On a subjective pain scale, he rates his pain 6 out of 10 with medications and 9 out of 10 without. The physical examination did not reveal any significant findings. The current medications are Naproxen, Cyclobenzaprine, Omeprazole, and Hydrocodone. Previous diagnostic studies include X-rays. Treatments to date include medication management and physical therapy (good results). Work status is described as off work. The original utilization review (8-27-2015) had non-certified a request for 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 the lumbar: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004, Section(s): Special Studies.

Decision rationale: According to CA MTUS/(ACOEM), 2nd edition (2004), page 303, Low Back Complaints, Chapter 12, which is part of the California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule. It 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, computer tomography [CT] for bony structures)." In this particular patient, there is no indication of criteria for an MRI based upon physician documentation or physical examination findings from the exam note of 8/11/15. Therefore, the request of the MRI of the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.