

Case Number:	CM15-0190560		
Date Assigned:	10/02/2015	Date of Injury:	12/01/2014
Decision Date:	11/20/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/28/2015

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: Texas, New York, California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational 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 applicant is a represented [REDACTED] beneficiary who has filed a claim for chronic neck pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of December 1, 2014. In a Utilization Review report dated September 8, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve requests for cervical MRI imaging. The claims administrator referenced a progress note and an associated RFA form of August 19, 2015 in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On said handwritten progress note dated August 19, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of neck and knee pain. The note comprised, in large part, of preprinted checkboxes, with little in the way of supporting rationale or supporting commentary. The applicant was placed off of work, on total temporary disability, for additional six weeks. The requesting provider was a chiropractor (DC), it was incidentally noted. 12 sessions of physical therapy, pain management consultation, electrodiagnostic testing of the bilateral upper and bilateral lower extremities, and MRI imaging of the cervical spine were all endorsed.

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 Neck and Upper Back Complaints 2004.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Neck and Upper Back Complaints 2004, Section(s): Summary.

Decision rationale: The request for MRI imaging of the cervical spine was not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. While the MTUS Guideline in ACOEM Chapter 8, Table 8-8, page 182 does recommend MRI or CT imaging of the cervical spine to help validate a diagnosis of nerve root compromise, based on clear history and physical exam findings, in preparation for an invasive procedure, here, however, the attending provider's August 19, 2015 progress note was thinly and sparsely developed, handwritten, compromised, in large part, of preprinted checkboxes without much in the way of supporting rationale or supporting commentary, and made no mention of the applicant's willingness to consider or contemplate any kind of surgical intervention involving the cervical spine based on the outcome of the study in question. The fact that the request was initiated by a chiropractor (as opposed to a spine surgeon or neurosurgeon) significantly reduced the likelihood of the applicant's acting on the results of the study in question and/or going on to consider cervical spine surgery based on the outcome of the same. The handwritten August 19, 2015 progress note contained little to no narrative commentary and did not establish the presence of nerve root compromise referable to the cervical spine and/or upper extremities. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.