

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0195563		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	11/03/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	07/24/2004
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/14/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	09/28/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/05/2015

### 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 59 year old male who sustained an industrial injury 07-24-04. A review of the medical records reveals the injured worker is undergoing treatment for possible pseudoarthrosis at the lumbar surgery sites, chronic low back pain, sacroiliac joint dysfunction, and lumbar radiculopathy. Medical records (08-19-15) reveal the injured worker complains of low back pain rated at 4/10. He reports that his lower back and lower extremity symptoms are "severe." He reports continued pain, numbness and tingling in the bilateral lower extremities, with the left greater than the right. The physical exam (08-19-15) reveals decreased sensation left L3-S1 dermatomal distribution and tenderness to palpation over the left sacroiliac joint. Prior treatment includes 3 lumbar spine surgeries including a lumbar fusion, physical therapy, an epidural steroid injection, and medications including Advil, Tylenol, Aleve, Norco, Percocet, Vicodin, tramadol, and gabapentin. The original utilization review (09-28-15) non certified the request for a MRI of the thoracic spine.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**1 MRI of the thoracic spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Neck and Upper Back Complaints 2004, Section(s): Special Studies.

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

**Decision rationale:** The ACOEM chapter on neck and upper back complaints and special diagnostic studies states: Criteria for ordering imaging studies are: Emergence of a red flag. Physiologic evidence of tissue insult or neurologic dysfunction. Failure to progress in a strengthening program intended to avoid surgery. Clarification of the anatomy prior to an invasive procedure. The provided progress notes fails to show any documentation of indications for imaging studies of the thoracic spine as outlined above per the ACOEM. There was no emergence of red flag. The neck pain was characterized as unchanged. The physical exam noted no evidence of new tissue insult or neurologic dysfunction. There is no planned invasive procedure. Therefore criteria have not been met for imaging of the thoracic spine and the request is not medically necessary.