

Case Number:	CM15-0027946		
Date Assigned:	02/20/2015	Date of Injury:	04/12/2002
Decision Date:	04/06/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/20/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/13/2015

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, Michigan, 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 67 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 4/12/2002. The diagnoses have included left L5-S1 herniated nucleus pulposus, left L3-5 fusion and recurrent right buttocks pain. Treatment to date has included posterior lumbar fusion at L4-5 and L3-4 levels. Currently, the IW complains of pain in the right back and right sacroiliac (SI) joint. She presented with a cane. Objective findings included exquisite tenderness in the right SI joint. There is tenderness in the lumbosacral area and discrete focal tenderness located in a palpable taut band of the skeletal muscle which produced a local twitch in response to pressure on the band. Range of motion to the lumbosacral spine was severely limited. Straight leg raise test reproduced pain in the back, right buttocks and right thigh. Computed tomography (CT) scan dated 10/06/2014 and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) dated 9/24/2014 were referenced and revealed a slight to moderate narrowing of the canal at T11-12 and L1-2, however no sign of myelopathy. On 1/20/2015, Utilization Review non-certified a request for lumbar discogram noting that the clinical information submitted for review fails to meet the evidence based guidelines for the requested service. The ACOEM Guidelines were cited. On 2/13/2015, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of lumbar discogram.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lumbar discogram: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 304-305.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Discography, http://www.worklossdatainstitute.verioiponly.com/odgtwc/low_back.htm.

Decision rationale: According to ODG guidelines, discography not recommended. In the past, discography has been used as part of the pre-operative evaluation of patients for consideration of surgical intervention for lower back pain. However, the conclusions of recent, high quality studies on discography have significantly questioned the use of discography results as a preoperative indication for either IDET or spinal fusion. These studies have suggested that reproduction of the patient's specific back complaints on injection of one or more discs (concordance of symptoms) is of limited diagnostic value. (Pain production was found to be common in non-back pain patients; pain reproduction was found to be inaccurate in many patients with chronic back pain and abnormal psychosocial testing, and in this latter patient type, the test itself was sometimes found to produce significant symptoms in non-back pain controls more than a year after testing.) Also, the findings of discography have not been shown to consistently correlate well with the finding of a High Intensity Zone (HIZ) on MRI. Discography may be justified if the decision has already been made to do a spinal fusion, and a negative discogram could rule out the need for fusion on that disc (but a positive discogram in itself would not allow fusion). (Carragee-Spine, 2000) (Carragee2-Spine, 2000) (Carragee3-Spine, 2000) (Carragee4-Spine, 2000) (Bigos, 1999) (ACR, 2000) (Resnick, 2002) (Madan, 2002) (Carragee-Spine, 2004) (Carragee2, 2004) (Maghout-Juratli, 2006) (Pneumaticos, 2006) (Airaksinen, 2006) (Manchikanti, 2009) Discography may help distinguish asymptomatic discs among morphologically abnormal discs in patients without psychosocial issues. Precise prospective categorization of discographic diagnoses may predict outcomes from treatment, surgical or otherwise. (Derby, 2005) (Derby2, 2005) (Derby, 1999) Positive discography was not highly predictive in identifying outcomes from spinal fusion. Patient selection criteria for Discography if provider & payor agree to perform anyway: Back pain of at least 3 months duration. Failure of recommended conservative treatment including active physical therapy. An MRI demonstrating one or more degenerated discs as well as one or more normal appearing discs to allow for an internal control injection (injection of a normal disc to validate the procedure by a lack of a pain response to that injection). Satisfactory results from detailed psychosocial assessment (discography in subjects with emotional and chronic pain problems has been linked to reports of significant back pain for prolonged periods after injection, and therefore should be avoided). Intended as screening tool to assist surgical decision making, i.e., the surgeon feels that lumbar spine fusion is appropriate but is looking for this to determine if it is not indicated (although discography is not highly predictive) (Carragee, 2006) NOTE: In a situation where the selection criteria and other surgical indications for fusion are conditionally met, discography can be considered in preparation for the surgical procedure. However, all of the qualifying conditions must be met prior to proceeding to discography as discography should be viewed as a non-diagnostic but confirmatory study for selecting operative levels for the proposed surgical procedure. Discography should not be ordered for a patient who does not meet surgical criteria. Briefed on potential risks and benefits from discography and surgery. Single level

testing (with control) (Colorado, 2001). Due to high rates of positive discogram after surgery for lumbar disc herniation, this should be potential reason for non-certification. In this case, there is no documentation that the patient failed conservative treatments. Furthermore, there is no documentation that the patient is candidate for surgery and there is no documentation of a detailed psychosocial assessment. Therefore, the request for lumbar discogram is not medically necessary.