

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0031676		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	02/25/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/11/2012
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/03/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	02/10/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/19/2015

### 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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & General Preventive 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 54 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 9/11/2012. On 2/19/15, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of MRI Chest Spine without dye (magnetic resonance imaging) of the thoracic spine. The treating provider has reported on 11/11/2014, the injured worker is complaining of low back pain with radiating pain to both legs with numbness. Injured worker is planning cervical C3-4 and C4-5 spine surgery May of 2015. The diagnoses have included cervical spine abnormalities, right carpal tunnel syndrome, left carpal tunnel syndrome; bilateral trapezium first metacarpal primary and post-traumatic arthritis, degenerative disc disease. Treatment to date has included physical therapy lumbar spine, status post surgery- right carpal tunnel release with a flexor tendon tenosynovectomy and median nerve neurolysis (6/21/13), MRI lumbar Spine without contrast (5/7/12) and (12/17/09). On 2/10/15 Utilization Review non-certified MRI Chest Spine without dye (magnetic resonance imaging) of the thoracic spine. The MTUS Guidelines were cited.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) of the thoracic spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-315. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging).

**Decision rationale:** MTUS and ACOEM recommend MRI, in general, for low back pain when "cauda equine, tumor, infection, or fracture are strongly suspected and plain film radiographs are negative, MRI test of choice for patients with prior back surgery" ACOEM additionally recommends against MRI for low back pain "before 1 month in absence of red flags". ODG states, "Imaging is indicated only if they have severe progressive neurologic impairments or signs or symptoms indicating a serious or specific underlying condition, or if they are candidates for invasive interventions." ODG lists criteria for low back and thoracic MRI, indications for imaging; Magnetic resonance imaging: Thoracic spine trauma: with neurological deficit- Lumbar spine trauma: trauma, neurological deficit; Lumbar spine trauma: seat belt (chance) fracture (If focal, radicular findings or other neurologic deficit); Uncomplicated low back pain, suspicion of cancer, infection, other red flags; Uncomplicated low back pain, with radiculopathy, after at least 1 month conservative therapy, sooner if severe or progressive neurologic deficit. Uncomplicated low back pain, prior lumbar surgery; Uncomplicated low back pain, cauda equina syndrome; Myelopathy (neurological deficit related to the spinal cord), traumatic- Myelopathy, painful; Myelopathy, sudden onset; Myelopathy, stepwise progressive; Myelopathy, slowly progressive; Myelopathy, infectious disease patient; Myelopathy, oncology patient. While the patient does have pain lasting greater than one month, there is no documented conservative therapy or progressive neurological deficit. The medical notes provided did not document (physical exam, objective testing, or subjective complaints) any red flags, significant worsening in symptoms or other findings suggestive of the pathologies outlined in the above guidelines. As such, the request for MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) of the thoracic spine is not medically necessary.