

Case Number:	CM15-0056634		
Date Assigned:	04/01/2015	Date of Injury:	08/03/2003
Decision Date:	05/06/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/25/2015

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: Maryland, Texas, Virginia

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Allergy and Immunology, Rheumatology

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 was a 58 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury, August 3, 2003. The injured worker previously received the following treatments Morphine, Norco, Tylenol, Trazodone, Valium, epidural steroid injection, status post laminectomy, TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulator) unit and status post fusion of L3-S1. The injured worker was diagnosed with degenerative disc disease, status post laminectomy, lumbar spine stenosis, left radiculitis and mood disorder. According to progress note of February 5, 2015, the injured workers chief complaint was the injection did not work. The back pain was described as aching, stabbing, throbbing, burning, numbing and tingling. The average pain level was 8 out of 10; 0 being no pain and 10 being the worse pain. The alleviating factors included medication and the use of the TENS unit, improved the pain by 75%. The physical exam noted bilateral back pain with paresthesia at bilateral legs, likely secondary to radiculopathy. The treatment plan included lumbar spine MRI without dye with sedation.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) Lumbar Spine, without dye, with sedation: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines: Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic).

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. Immediate imaging is recommended for patients with major risk factors for cancer, spinal infection, cauda equina syndrome, or severe or progressive neurologic deficits. Imaging after a trial of treatment is recommended for patients who have minor risk factors for cancer, inflammatory back disease, vertebral compression fracture, radiculopathy, or symptomatic spinal stenosis. Subsequent imaging should be based on new symptoms or changes in current symptoms." 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) Lumbar Spine, without dye with sedation is not medically necessary.