

Case Number:	CM15-0083485		
Date Assigned:	05/05/2015	Date of Injury:	08/14/2012
Decision Date:	06/05/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/16/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/30/2015

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 58 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on August 14, 2012, incurring low back injuries after lifting heavy objects. Magnetic Resonance Imaging revealed degenerative changes with disc bulges. He was diagnosed with right sacroiliac joint arthropathy, lumbar radiculitis, and lumbar disc disease and facet syndrome. Treatment included physical therapy, lumber epidural steroid injection, pain medications and anti-inflammatory drugs. In 2014, he saw pain management again. His pain level was 4-5. The injured worker had an epidural steroid injection and additional physical therapy with no relief. Currently, in 2015, the injured worker complained of constant low back pain radiating to the right lower extremity. The pain increased with walking and bending, but had no pain at rest. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization included Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the lumbar spine without contrast.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI of lumbar spine without contrast: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Low Back, Repeat MRI.

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 of lumbar spine without contrast is not medically necessary.