

Case Number:	CM15-0086306		
Date Assigned:	05/08/2015	Date of Injury:	02/04/2010
Decision Date:	06/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/16/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/05/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational 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 29 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 2/4/10. He reported pain in his lower back. The injured worker was diagnosed as having chronic lower back pain, lumbosacral degenerative disc disease and chronic pain syndrome. Treatment to date has included a thoracic MRI and medication (muscle relaxants and Tramadol). As of the PR2 dated 3/20/15, the injured worker reports chronic lower back pain that has increased in the last month. There is numbness and tingling in his left leg and radiation of pain into his lower extremities. He has difficulty sleeping. He does not take medication on a consistent basis due to the side effect of drowsiness. On exam the treating physician noted antalgic gait, normal motor exam and postural guarding with stiffness. The treating physician requested a lumbar MRI.

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, 72148: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-328.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303-4, 309. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation American College of Radiology, Appropriateness Criteria for the Imaging of Lower Back Pain, Revised 2011.

Decision rationale: Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans are medical imaging studies used in radiology to investigate the anatomy and physiology of the body in both healthy and diseased tissues. MRIs of the lower back are indicated in acute injuries with associated red flags, that is, signs and symptoms suggesting acutely compromised nerve tissue. In chronic situations the indications rely more on a history of failure to improve with conservative therapies, the need for clarification of anatomy before surgery, or to identify potentially serious problems such as tumors or nerve root compromise. When the history is non-specific for nerve compromise but conservative treatment has not been effective in improving the patient's symptoms, electromyography (EMG) and nerve conduction velocity (NCV) studies are recommended before having a MRI done. This patient does meet the criteria of prolonged or persistent symptoms despite conservative care but the symptoms are non-specific, there are no red flags and an EMG/NCV study has not been done. At this point in the care of this individual a MRI of the lower back is not indicated. The request is not medically necessary.