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| <b>Case Number:</b>   | CM15-0086891 |                              |            |
| <b>Date Assigned:</b> | 05/11/2015   | <b>Date of Injury:</b>       | 12/15/2009 |
| <b>Decision Date:</b> | 06/12/2015   | <b>UR Denial Date:</b>       | 04/15/2015 |
| <b>Priority:</b>      | Standard     | <b>Application Received:</b> | 05/06/2015 |

### 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 38 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 12/15/2009. On provider visit dated 04/03/2015 the injured worker has reported pain and discomfort in the elbow. On examination, the bilateral hands and wrist were noted as having positive Tinel's and Phalen's sign bilaterally. There was a decreased light touch sensation in the right elbow. The injured worker reported to not be able to feel sensation in the right elbow. The diagnoses have included status post left shoulder surgery on July 31, 2012, cervical disc injury and lumbosacral sprain/stain injury. Treatment to date has included therapy and medication. The provider requested MRI right elbow.

### 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 right elbow:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 10 Elbow Disorders (Revised 2007).

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 10 Elbow Disorders (Revised 2007) Page(s): 33-34.

**Decision rationale:** MTUS Guidelines recommend imaging studies of the elbow for the following indications: 1) The imaging study results will substantially change the treatment plan. 2) Emergence of a red flag. 3) Failure to progress in a rehabilitation program, evidence of significant tissue insult or neurological dysfunction that has been shown to be correctable by invasive treatment, and agreement by the patient to undergo invasive treatment if the presence of the correctable lesion is confirmed. For most patients presenting with elbow problems, special studies are not necessary unless a period of at least 4 weeks of conservative care and observation fails to improve their symptoms. Most patients improve quickly, provided red flag conditions are ruled out. There are a few exceptions to the rule to avoid special studies absent red flags in the first month, which include: 1) Plain-film radiography to rule out osteomyelitis or joint effusion in cases of significant septic olecranon bursitis. 2) Electromyography (EMG) study if cervical radiculopathy is suspected as a cause of lateral arm pain, and that condition has been present for at least 6 weeks. 3) Nerve conduction study and possibly EMG if severe nerve entrapment is suspected on the basis of physical examination, denervation atrophy is likely, and there is a failure to respond to conservative treatment. For patients with limitations of activity after 4 weeks and unexplained physical findings such as effusion or localized pain (especially following exercise), imaging may be indicated to clarify the diagnosis and revise the treatment strategy if appropriate. Imaging findings should be correlated with physical findings. In general, an imaging study may be an appropriate consideration for a patient whose limitations due to consistent symptoms have persisted for 1 month or more, as in the following cases: 1) When surgery is being considered for a specific anatomic defect. 2) To further evaluate potentially serious pathology, such as a possible tumor, when the clinical examination suggests the diagnosis. The medical reports do not provide evidence that the injured worker has completed a complete course of physical therapy or failed with other, more conservative, treatments. There are no reported conditions that support the use of MRI within the recommendations of the MTUS Guidelines. The request for MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) of the right elbow is not medically necessary.