

Case Number:	CM14-0164105		
Date Assigned:	10/08/2014	Date of Injury:	09/20/2011
Decision Date:	11/04/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/18/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/06/2014

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Occupational Medicine and is licensed to practice in California. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

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 patient has constant back pain. He underwent an artificial disc replacement at L4-L5 in 2005 and subsequently developed back pain and leg pain. He underwent a decompression on March 21, 2013. He is now approximately 6 months after that surgery. He is better now than before the surgery. His leg pain is significantly better and his back pain is improved as well but he still has some moderate degree of constant back pain. The diagnosis is facet joint disease at L4-L5 status post artificial disc replacement at this level.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI upright of the lumbar spine QTY: 1.00: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303-305. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines low back chapter

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303.

Decision rationale: Under MTUS/ACOEM, although there is subjective information presented in regarding increasing pain, there are little in the way of progressive neurologic physical signs. Even if the signs are of an equivocal nature, the MTUS note that electrodiagnostic confirmation

generally comes first. They note 'Unequivocal objective findings that identify specific nerve compromise on the neurologic examination are sufficient evidence to warrant imaging in patients who do not respond to treatment and who would consider surgery an option. When the neurologic examination is less clear, however, further physiologic evidence of nerve dysfunction should be obtained before ordering an imaging study.' The guides warn that indiscriminate imaging will result in false positive findings, such as disk bulges, that are not the source of painful symptoms and do not warrant surgery. I did not find electrodiagnostic studies. It can be said that ACOEM is intended for more acute injuries; therefore other evidence-based guides were also examined. The ODG guidelines note, in the Low Back Procedures section:- 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- Uncomplicated low back pain, with radiculopathy, after at least 1 month conservative therapy, sooner if severe or progressive neurologic deficit. (For unequivocal evidence of radiculopathy, see AMA Guides, 5th Edition, page 382-383.) (Anderson, 2000)- Uncomplicated low back pain, prior lumbar surgery- Uncomplicated low back pain, cauda equina syndrome These criteria are also not met in this case; the request was appropriately determined not medically necessary under the MTUS and other evidence-based criteria.