

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0176907		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/30/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	06/24/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/15/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/15/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/24/2014

### 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:

There were 81 pages provided for this review. The application for independent medical review was dated October 21, 2014. It was for an MRI of the lumbar spine and EMG NCS. Per the records provided, the patient is a 25-year-old male injured back in the year 2011. As of August 25, 2014, he continued to have cervical spine pain with stiffness and headaches and continued low back pain with stiffness. The patient also reported continued anxiety, depression, stress and difficulty sleeping. Objective findings included restricted cervical and lumbar spine ranges of motion with palpation tenderness over the cervical and lumbar paraspinal and musculature. There was also positive orthopedic tests for possible nerve root irritation. The ODG was also examined and it noted that repeat MRIs are not routinely needed.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**(1) MRI of the lumbar spine:** Upheld

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

**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 accompanying 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.) (Andersson, 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 (1) MRI of the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.

**(1) EMG/NCS of the lower extremities:** 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- Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic)

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

**Decision rationale:** The MTUS ACOEM notes that Electrodiagnostic studies may be used when the neurologic examination is unclear, further physiologic evidence of nerve dysfunction should be obtained before ordering an imaging study. In this case, there was not a neurologic exam showing equivocal signs that might warrant clarification with Electrodiagnostic testing. The request (1) EMG/NCS of the lower extremities is not medically necessary.