MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0102383		
Date Assigned:	06/04/2015	Date of Injury:	06/12/2009
Decision Date:	07/07/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/22/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/27/2015

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: New Jersey, Alabama, California
Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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 60 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 6/12/09. She has reported initial complaints of a low back injury. The diagnoses have included low back pain and spinal stenosis with neurogenic claudication. Treatment to date has included medications, activity modifications, off work, water aerobics, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) and home exercise program (HEP). Currently, as per the physician progress note dated 4/8/15, the injured worker complains of ongoing back and bilateral leg pain. The pain goes down the posterior thigh and is burning, achy and sharp. It is noted that she has not had a recent Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), injections or physical therapy. She takes Tramadol and Gabapentin to help with the symptoms. The diagnostic testing that was performed included Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of the lumbar spine dated 9/3/13 but was not submitted with the records. The physical exam reveals that the blood pressure is 142/88, pulse is 80, and weight is 223 pounds. The lumbar exam is unremarkable. The physician noted that the last lumbar Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) was dated September 2013 and she would like an updated Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of the lumbar spine and to follow her up after the testing.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI Lumbar Spine: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: Regarding the indications for imaging in case of back pain, MTUS guidelines stated: "Lumbar spine x rays should not be recommended in patients with low back pain in the absence of red flags for serious spinal pathology, even if the pain has persisted for at least six weeks. However, it may be appropriate when the physician believes it would aid in patient management. 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. Indiscriminant imaging will result in false-positive findings, such as disk bulges, that are not the source of painful symptoms and do not warrant surgery. If physiologic evidence indicates tissue insult or nerve impairment, the practitioner can discuss with a consultant the selection of an imaging test to define a potential cause (magnetic resonance imaging [MRI] for neural or other soft tissue, computer tomography [CT] for bony structures)." Furthermore, and according to MTUS guidelines, MRI is the test of choice for patients with prior back surgery, fracture or tumors that may require surgery. The patient does not have any clear evidence of lumbar radiculopathy or nerve root compromise. There is no clear evidence of significant change in the patient's signs or symptoms suggestive of new pathology. Therefore, the request for MRI of the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.