

Case Number:	CM15-0111086		
Date Assigned:	06/17/2015	Date of Injury:	09/02/2011
Decision Date:	07/16/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/21/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/09/2015

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: Arizona, California
Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 54 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 09/02/11. Initial complaints and diagnoses are no available. Treatments to date include medications, epidural steroid injections, and right knee surgery. Diagnostic studies are not addressed. Current complaints include headaches, neck pain and numbness in the arms, stiffness and mild spasms. Current diagnoses include cervical strain, shoulder tendinitis, and upper extremity numbness. In a progress note dated 05/04/15 the treating provider reports the plan of care as follow-up with a specialists, a MRI of the cervical spine and electrodiagnostic studies, as well as a new cane, spica brace for the right thumb. The requested treatments include follow-up with a specialist.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Follow up with Specialist: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ACOEM Chapter 7: Independent Medical Examinations and Consultations, page 127.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG- pain chapter and office guidelines.

Decision rationale: According to the guidelines, office visits are recommended as medically necessary. The determination is also based on what medications the patient is taking, since some medicines such as opiates, or medicines such as certain antibiotics, require close monitoring. As patient conditions are extremely varied, a set number of office visits per condition cannot be reasonably established. The determination of necessity for an office visit requires individualized case review and assessment, being ever mindful that the best patient outcomes are achieved with eventual patient independence from the health care system through self care as soon as clinically feasible. A specialist referral may be made if the diagnosis is uncertain, extremely complex, when psychosocial factors are present, or when the plan or course of care may benefit from additional expertise. A consultation is used to aid in diagnosis, prognosis, and therapeutic management, determination of medical stability, and permanent residual loss and/or examinees fitness for return to work. In this case, the claimant was referred to a pain specialist in March 2015 for possible ESI or injections. The exam findings and MRI were consistent with radiculopathy and the referral for a pain specialist follow-up is appropriate and medically necessary.