

Case Number:	CM15-0115278		
Date Assigned:	06/23/2015	Date of Injury:	03/27/2008
Decision Date:	07/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/09/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/15/2015

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: Texas, Florida, 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 62-year-old female who sustained a work related injury March 27, 2008. Past history included back and hand surgery. According to physician's notes, dated June 2, 2015, the injured worker presented with ongoing back pain, rated 8/10, described as moderate and increasing, constant and stabbing. The pain is located across the lumbar spine and radiating into both lower extremities. The symptoms are alleviated by injections and physical therapy. Examination of the lumbar spine revealed; severe tenderness at the right sciatic notch and lower lumbar spine, range of motion is moderately decreased, straight leg raise is negative bilaterally, and left and right Kemp's test, positive. Diagnoses are back pain; lumbar radiculopathy; lumbar degenerative disc disease; spinal stenosis with neurogenic claudication. At issue, is the request for authorization for an MRI of the lumbar spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) with contrast material, of the lumbar spine, quantity: 1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 309. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Work Loss Data Institute, Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Treatment in Workers Compensation (TWC), 5th Edition.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine Page 303, Low Back Complaints.

Decision rationale: This claimant was injured in 2008. There was back and hand surgery. The pain is relieved by injections and PT. There is tenderness. SLR is negative bilaterally. 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 electro diagnostic 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 electro diagnostic 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 request was not medically necessary and appropriately non-certified under the MTUS and other evidence-based criteria.