

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0119202		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	06/29/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	04/10/2012
<b>Decision Date:</b>	07/28/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	05/22/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	06/19/2015

### 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: North Carolina  
 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 47 year old female, who sustained an industrial/work injury on 4/10/12. She reported initial complaints of lower back pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having displacement of thoracic or lumbar intervertebral disc without myelopathy, thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis, unspecified, and chronic pain. Treatment to date has included medication and diagnostics. Currently, the injured worker complains of symptoms becoming more frequent and intense from last visit with pain radiating down the posterior aspect of bilateral legs to ankles with intermittent numbness and tingling. Per the primary physician's progress report (PR-2) on 5/5/15, examination revealed palpation of the back demonstrating lumbosacral tenderness, range of motion approximately 60% of normal flexion and extension, positive Gower's sign, and pain in the extremities. The requested treatments include MRI of the lumbar spine (lower back) without contrast for back and severe leg pain.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**MRI of the lumbar spine (lower back) without contrast for back and severe leg pain:**  
 Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints.

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

**Decision rationale:** The ACOEM chapter on low back complaints and special diagnostic studies states: 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, computed tomography [CT] for bony structures). Relying solely on imaging studies to evaluate the source of low back and related symptoms carries a significant risk of diagnostic confusion (false positive test results) because of the possibility of identifying a finding that was present before symptoms began and therefore has no temporal association with the symptoms. Techniques vary in their abilities to define abnormalities (Table 12-7). Imaging studies should be reserved for cases in which surgery is considered or red-flag diagnoses are being evaluated. Because the overall false-positive rate is 30% for imaging studies in patients over age 30 who do not have symptoms, the risk of diagnostic confusion is great. There is no recorded presence of emerging red flags on the physical exam. There is evidence of nerve compromise on physical exam but there is not mention of consideration for surgery or complete failure of conservative therapy. For these reasons, criteria for imaging as defined above per the ACOEM have not been met. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.