

Case Number:	CM15-0123444		
Date Assigned:	07/07/2015	Date of Injury:	10/06/2014
Decision Date:	08/05/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/26/2015

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 injury worker is a 59 year-old female with an industrial injury dated 10/06/2014. The injury is documented as occurring when she was lifting heavy boxes when she suddenly felt pain in her left shoulder. Her diagnoses included left shoulder rotator cuff tear and right elbow medial epicondylitis. Prior treatment included diagnostics, physical therapy and medications. She presented on 05/29/2015 with constant left shoulder pain rated as 8-9/10. She also complains of elbow pain with repetitive use. Physical exam noted pain with Hawkins' and Neer's. There was pain with empty can and supraspinatus testing. Speed's test was positive. There was tenderness along the medial epicondyle and pain with resisted wrist flexion. Treatment plan included MRI of the right elbow and medications with follow up in six weeks. The treatment request is for MRI of the right elbow without contrast.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI of the right elbow without contrast: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG Elbow (updated 10/20/14) Online Version.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 10 Elbow Disorders (Revised 2007).

Decision rationale: The ACOEM chapter on elbow complaints and imaging studies states: Special Studies and Diagnostic and Treatment Considerations Criteria for ordering imaging studies are: The imaging study results will substantially change the treatment plan. Emergence of a red flag. Failure to progress in a rehabilitation program, evidence of significant tissue insult or neurological dysfunction that has been shown to be correctible by invasive treatment, and agreement by the patient to undergo invasive treatment if the presence of the correctible lesion is confirmed. For most patients presenting with elbow problems, special studies are not needed unless a period of at least 4 weeks of conservative care and observation fails to improve their symptoms. Most patients improve quickly, provided red flag conditions are ruled out. There are a few exceptions to the rule to avoid special studies absent red flags in the first month. These exceptions include: Plain-film radiography to rule out osteomyelitis or joint effusion in cases of significant septic olecranon bursitis. Electromyography (EMG) study if cervical radiculopathy is suspected as a cause of lateral arm pain, and that condition has been present for at least 6 weeks. Nerve conduction study and possibly EMG if severe nerve entrapment is suspected on the basis of physical examination, denervation atrophy is likely, and there is a failure to respond to conservative treatment. For patients with limitations of activity after 4 weeks and unexplained physical findings such as effusion or localized pain (especially following exercise), imaging may be indicated to clarify the diagnosis and revise the treatment strategy if appropriate. Imaging findings should be correlated with physical findings. In general, an imaging study may be an appropriate consideration for a patient whose limitations due to consistent symptoms have persisted for 1 month or more, as in the following cases: "When surgery is being considered for a specific anatomic defect." To further evaluate potentially serious pathology, such as a possible tumor, when the clinical examination suggests the diagnosis. There is no documentation of red flags on the provided physical exam. The criteria as outlined above per the ACOEM for imaging studies of the elbow have not been met. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.