Case Number:	CM15-0171462		
Date Assigned:	09/11/2015	Date of Injury:	02/13/2009
Decision Date:	10/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/14/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/31/2015

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 male, who sustained an industrial injury on 2-13-09. He reported back pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar degenerative disc disease, low back pain, lumbar herniated nucleus pulposus, and sciatica. Treatment to date has included an epidural injection, left L4-5 microdiskectomy on 10-16-12, physical therapy, and medication. Physical examination findings on 7-31-15 included antalgic gait, tenderness in the midline to left paraspinal muscles at L4-5 and limited lumbar spine range of motion due to pain. Motor strength of the lower extremities was normal and sensation to touch was intact an equal in all dermatomes bilaterally. Lower extremity deep tendon reflexes were 2+ and symmetrical bilaterally. Currently, the injured worker complains of left lower extremity sciatica associated with numbness and paresthesias. The treating physician requested authorization for a computed tomography scan of the lumbar spine without contrast. On 8-14-15, the request was non-certified; the utilization review physician noted, "The clinical documentation submitted for review did not show that the patient has any neurological deficits to support the requested computed tomography scan."

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

CT scan of the lumbar spine without contrast: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004, Section(s): Special Studies.

Decision rationale: 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.