

Case Number:	CM15-0173224		
Date Assigned:	09/15/2015	Date of Injury:	02/09/1994
Decision Date:	10/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/26/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/02/2015

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 53-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on February 09, 1994. A primary treating office visit dated March 04, 2015 reported subjective complaint of neck, right shoulder, right elbow and forearm, and right wrist and hand pains. The assessment applied the following diagnoses: cervical strain, myofascial pain and cervical radiculitis; impingement syndrome, shoulder strain; lateral epicondylitis, and carpal tunnel syndrome. Current medications consisted of: Ibuprofen, Skelaxin. There is mention that the worker is self-procuring acupuncture sessions with noted benefit in the past allowing her to work with minimal lost time due to pain. At primary follow up dated May 26, 2015 reported the worker being status post lateral release right elbow with residual parasthesia's. She is noted as permanent and stationary. The plan of care is with recommendation to undergo nerve conduction study ruling out cervical radiculopathy versus shoulder impingement syndrome. Previous treatment to include: activity modification, acupuncture, medication, topical analgesia, exercise, injection (last given June 03, 2015). Again, at primary follow up dated June 23, 2105 the plan of care is with recommendation to undergo nerve conduction study.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

EMG/NCS of the Right Upper Extremity: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

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

Decision rationale: The ACOEM chapter on neck and upper back complaints and special diagnostic studies states: Criteria for ordering imaging studies are: Emergence of a red flag, physiologic evidence of tissue insult or neurologic dysfunction, failure to progress in a strengthening program intended to avoid surgery, clarification of the anatomy prior to an invasive procedure. Physiologic evidence may be in the form of definitive neurologic findings on physical examination, electrodiagnostic studies, laboratory tests, or bone scans. Unequivocal findings that identify specific nerve compromise on the neurologic examination are sufficient evidence to warrant imaging studies if symptoms persist. When the neurologic examination is less clear, however, further physiologic evidence of nerve dysfunction can be obtained before ordering an imaging study. Electromyography (EMG), and nerve conduction velocities (NCV), including H-reflex tests, may help identify subtle focal neurologic dysfunction in patients with neck or arm symptoms, or both, lasting more than three or four weeks. The assessment may include sensory-evoked potentials (SEPs) if spinal stenosis or spinal cord myelopathy is suspected. If physiologic evidence indicates tissue insult or nerve impairment, consider a discussion with a consultant regarding next steps, including the selection of an imaging test to define a potential cause (magnetic resonance imaging [MRI] for neural or other soft tissue, compute tomography [CT] for bony structures). Additional studies may be considered to further define problem areas. The recent evidence indicates cervical disk annular tears may be missed on MRIs. The clinical significance of such a finding is unclear, as it may not correlate temporally or anatomically with symptoms. The provided documentation does not show any signs of emergence of red flags. There is evidence of neurologic dysfunction on exam. There is no mention of planned invasive procedures. There are no subtle neurologic findings listed on the physical exam. Conservative treatment has not been exhausted. For these reasons criteria for special diagnostic testing has not been met per the ACOEM. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.