

Case Number:	CM15-0179377		
Date Assigned:	09/21/2015	Date of Injury:	11/22/2010
Decision Date:	10/23/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/31/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/11/2015

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 53 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 11-22-10. Medical record indicated the injured worker is undergoing treatment for bilateral knee osteoarthritis. Treatment to date has included oral medications including Norco, Robaxin, Celebrex; compression stocking and activity modifications. Currently on 6-17-15, the injured worker complains of continued bilateral knee pain which has worsened and he awakens 2-3 times a night due to pain. Disability status is noted to be permanent and stationary. Physical exam on 6-17-15 revealed tenderness to palpation over the medial joint line of bilateral knees with mild crepitus. Based on the file presented the treatment plan included Norco 10-325mg #60, Robaxin 750mg #30, Celebrex 200mg #30 and a follow up appointment. On 8-31-15 utilization review non-certified a request for (MRI) magnetic resonance imaging of thoracic spine noting there is no currently available medical narrative report for the applicable date of service documenting current symptoms or physical exam findings noting the medical necessity cannot be addressed due to lack of documentation.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI of The Thoracic Spine without Contrast: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine Page 303, Back Complaints. Key case points are as follows. The claimant was injured in 2010 with bilateral knee osteoarthritis. On 8-31-15 utilization review non-certified a request for (MRI) magnetic resonance imaging of thoracic spine noting there is no currently available medical narrative report for the applicable date of service documenting current symptoms or physical exam findings noting the medical necessity cannot be addressed due to lack of documentation. 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 electrodiagnostic 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 electrodiagnostic 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 appropriately not medically necessary under the MTUS and other evidence-based criteria.