MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0048457		
Date Assigned:	03/20/2015	Date of Injury:	01/15/2010
Decision Date:	05/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/19/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/13/2015

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, New York, 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 applicant is a represented 52-year-old [redacted] employee, who has filed a claim for chronic neck pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of January 15, 2010. In a Utilization Review Report dated February 19, 2015, the claims administrator denied a request for CT discography of the cervical spine. January 30, 2015 RFA form and associated progress of February 6, 2015 were referenced in the determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On September 2, 2014, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of neck pain, status post earlier failed fusion surgery. The applicant received multiple trigger point injections, while Norco, Prilosec, tramadol, and Flexeril were renewed. The applicant was asked to continue Wellbutrin and Neurontin; it was stated in another section of the note. On March 9, 2015, the applicant was asked to consider a spinal cord stimulator for ongoing complaints of low back pain radiating to the legs. There was no mention made of the need for provocative discography. Ultracet, Flexeril, Prilosec, Zofran, Doral, Norco, and Lyrica were renewed. On February 6, 2015, the applicant reiterated his request for a spinal cord simulator. Once again, there was no mention made of the need for discography or CT discography. The applicant's primary pain generator was lumbar radiculopathy. The applicant received multiple trigger point injections.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cervical Discogram with CT Scan: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Treatment for Workers Compensation, Online Edition, Neck and Upper Back Chapter.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 182.

Decision rationale: No, the request for a cervical discogram with associated CT scan was not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. As noted in the MTUS Guideline in ACOEM Chapter 8, Table 8-8, page 182, discography the article at issue, is deemed "not recommended." The attending provider did not furnish any clear or compelling applicant-specific rationale, which would offset the unfavorable ACOEM position at article at issue, it was further noted. The bulk of the documentation seemingly suggested that the applicant's primary pain generator was low back pain for which the applicant was actively considering a spinal cord stimulator implantation. The cervical spine, by all accounts, appeared to be an ancillary, only briefly touched upon issue. No clear rationale for the study in question was furnished in the face of the unfavorable ACOEM position on discography in the cervical spine region. Therefore, the request was not medically necessary.