

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Case Number: | CM15-0063111 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 04/08/2015 | Date of Injury: | 08/10/2010 |
| Decision Date: | 05/07/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 03/26/2015 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 04/02/2015 |

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 46-year-old male who sustained an industrial injury on 08/10/2010. Diagnosis is status post L4 through S1 posterior lumbar decompression with instrumented fusion. Treatment to date has included past surgery, diagnostic studies, medications, trigger point injections and physical therapy. A physician progress note dated 03/17/2015 documents the injured worker complains of pain in the lumbar spine with pain increasing with bending and stooping. Lumbar spine motion is restricted and causes painful symptoms. Hyperextension of the lower back causes radiating pain to the bilateral buttocks. There is muscle spasm present. Straight leg raising is negative bilaterally. Left hip, right hip, left knee, right knee flexion are normal, and left knee extension, right knee extension are normal. Left and right ankle dorsiflexion are normal. Her pain is moderate to severe. Treatment requested is for Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the lumbar spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI of the lumbar spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints
Page(s): 303-304.

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 no evidence of nerve compromise on physical exam and 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.