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| Case Number: | CM15-0070132 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 04/17/2015 | Date of Injury: | 09/18/2008 |
| Decision Date: | 05/19/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 03/14/2015 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 04/13/2015 |

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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & General Preventive 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 65-year-old male with an industrial injury dated as 09/18/2008. His diagnoses includes cervical stenosis and myelopathy, status post anterior decompression and fusion from cervical 3 through cervical 6, residual post-operative cervical radiculopathy and possible cervical pseudoarthrosis with migration of anterior hardware. Prior treatments included diagnostics to include MRI, CT scan and nerve conduction study. He presents on 02/25/2015 with complaints of neck pain radiating into his left arm. Physical examination revealed improved external rotator strength. He had 5/5 strength throughout the right upper extremity. MRI report from 07/05/2014 is documented in this note. The treating physician notes he would like to compare an updated MRI to previous imaging studies to ensure there is no mechanical pinch that could be prohibiting the injured worker from increasing his strength in the left arm and shoulder. The treatment plan included MRI of cervical spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

MRI Cervical Spine without contrast: 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) Neck and Upper Back Chapter.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints, Chapter 11 Forearm, Wrist, and Hand Complaints Page(s): 177,182. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck and Upper Back, Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Decision rationale: ACOEM 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 and Clarification of the anatomy prior to an invasive procedure". ODG states, "Not recommended except for indications list below. Patients who are alert, have never lost consciousness, are not under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, have no distracting injuries, have no cervical tenderness, and have no neurologic findings, do not need imaging". Indications for imaging MRI (magnetic resonance imaging): Chronic neck pain (after 3 months conservative treatment), radiographs normal, neurologic signs or symptoms present; Neck pain with radiculopathy if severe or progressive neurologic deficit; Chronic neck pain, radiographs show spondylosis, neurologic signs or symptoms present; Chronic neck pain, radiographs show old trauma, neurologic signs or symptoms present; Chronic neck pain, radiographs show bone or disc margin destruction; Suspected cervical spine trauma, neck pain, clinical findings suggest ligamentous injury (sprain), radiographs and/or CT "normal"; Known cervical spine trauma: equivocal or positive plain films with neurological deficit; Upper back/thoracic spine trauma with neurological deficit. The treating physician has not provided evidence of red flags to meet the criteria above. As such the request for MRI Cervical Spine without contrast is not medically necessary.