

Case Number:	CM15-0074411		
Date Assigned:	04/24/2015	Date of Injury:	07/09/2002
Decision Date:	05/21/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/14/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/20/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Pain Management

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 49-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 7/8/02. He reported pain in his lower back related to cumulative trauma. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbosacral radiculopathy, lumbosacral sprain and lumbosacral discectomy with laminectomy. Treatment to date has included a lumbar MRI in 2004, EMG/NCV study, lumbar epidural injections and pain medications. As of the PR2 dated 4/1/15, the injured worker reports continued low back and leg pain. The treating physician noted tenderness to palpation in the lumbar spine. The treatment plan includes continuing oral pain medications and a possible lumbar epidural injection. The treating physician requested a lumbar MRI.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lumbar MRI: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 304, 309. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back-Acute and Chronic, MRIs.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 303-304. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back Chapter, MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging).

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for repeat lumbar MRI, Occupational Medicine Practice Guidelines state that 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 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. ODG states that MRIs are recommended for uncomplicated low back pain with radiculopathy after at least one month of conservative therapy. Repeat MRI is not routinely recommended, and should be reserved for a significant change in symptoms and/or findings suggestive of significant pathology. Within the documentation available for review, there is no identification of any objective findings that identify specific nerve compromise on the neurologic exam. Additionally, there is no statement indicating what medical decision-making will be based upon the outcome of the currently requested MRI. Furthermore, there is no documentation indicating how the patient's subjective complaints and objective findings have changed since the time of the most recent MRI of the lumbar spine. In the absence of clarity regarding those issues, the currently requested lumbar MRI is not medically necessary.