

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0077190		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/28/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/21/2006
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/26/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	03/24/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	04/22/2015

### 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 54 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 3/21/2006. He reported lumbar pain. Diagnoses have included intractable low back pain, lumbar disc degeneration, lumbar radiculopathy, postsurgical lumbar spine and sciatica. Treatment to date has included lumbar surgery, epidural steroid injection and medication. According to the progress report dated 3/5/2015, the injured worker complained of pain over his lumbar spine, back and left lower extremity. He rated his pain as 8/10. Exam of the thoracic spine revealed increased muscle spasticity. Exam of the lumbar spine revealed severe muscle spasticity. There was pain to loading of the spinous processes and the facet joint line. Range of motion was reduced. The treatment plan was for a spinal cord stimulator trial. Authorization was requested for thoracic magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

### 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:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287; 303.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints  
Page(s): American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine Page 303, Low Back Complaints.

**Decision rationale:** This claimant was injured 9 years ago, and has degenerative spine disease. There is pain described, but no objective neurologic examination. 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 non-certified under the MTUS and other evidence-based criteria. Therefore, the requested treatment is not medically necessary.