

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM13-0014333		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/02/2013	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	11/19/1996
<b>Decision Date:</b>	01/29/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	07/31/2013
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/20/2013

### HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to a physician reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The physician reviewer is Board Certified in Occupational Medicine and is licensed to practice in California. 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 physician 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/services.

### 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 45-year-old medical biller who has filed a claim for chronic neck and low back pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of November 19, 1999. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; transfer of care to and from various providers in various specialties; attorney representation; and topical applications of heat and cold. It does not appear that the applicant has returned to work. In a utilization review report of July 30, 2013, the claims administrator denied the request for facet joint blocks and Nucynta. The applicant's attorney later appealed. In a clinical progress note of July 10, 2013, the applicant presents with 8/10 neck and low back pain. The applicant states that she has not had any procedures to alleviate her pain. She continues to smoke 10 cigarettes a day. She exhibits an antalgic gait. She weighs 185 pounds. Tenderness is noted over the cervical paraspinal musculature. There is no facetogenic tenderness. The applicant is described as having strength about the left upper extremity ranging from 4/5 to 5/5 with decreased sensation noted about the C6-C7 dermatomes. The applicant was given the diagnoses of cervical radiculopathy, cervical disc disease, cervical ligamentous strain, lumbar disc disease, lumbar radiculopathy, and lumbar facet arthropathy. It is then stated that the applicant has undergone a prior epidural steroid injection. A second C5-C6 and C6-C7 facet epidural steroid injection is endorsed. The applicant was asked to continue with hot and cold unit and employ Lidoderm and Percocet for pain relief. The applicant's work status was not clearly detailed. It did not appear that the applicant has returned to work.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Left C5-C6, C6-C7 transfacet epidural steroid injection #2:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for the use of Epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

**Decision rationale:** The Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines indicate that repeat epidural blocks should be based on objective evidence of functional improvement. In this case, however, there is no evidence of functional improvement, either in terms of pain relief, medication reduction, or as defined in the guidelines. The applicant does not appear to have returned to work. There is no evidence of diminished reliance on medical treatment, either. The applicant's continued usage of analgesic medications including Lidoderm, Percocet, and the hot and cold unit imply that the prior epidural steroid injection therapy was unsuccessful and further imply a lack of functional improvement. Therefore, the original utilization review decision is upheld. The request is not certified.