MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM13-0026442		
Date Assigned:	07/09/2014	Date of Injury:	04/27/2012
Decision Date:	09/11/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/11/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/19/2013

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. The expert 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 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

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 [redacted] employee who has filed a claim for chronic neck pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of April 27, 2012. The applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; unspecified amounts of physical therapy; transfer of care to and from various providers in various specialties; and prior epidural steroid injection therapy, per the claims administrator. In a Utilization Review Report dated September 11, 2013, the claims administrator denied a request for a C6-C7 cervical epidural steroid injection on the grounds that the applicant had failed to profit from earlier epidural steroid injection therapy. The applicant did in fact undergo a C6-C7 epidural steroid injection on a procedure note of March 20, 2013 as well as on a previous procedure note of December 5, 2012. In a medical-legal evaluation of April 16, 2013, the applicant apparently was given diagnoses of chronic shoulder pain, chronic mid back pain, chronic neck pain, and chronic low back pain. The applicant was described as totally temporarily disabled by the medical-legal evaluator. The applicant was having difficulty performing even basic activities of daily living, including making meals, taking showers, lifting a gallon of milk, and driving a vehicle. In a handwritten note dated May 1, 2013, the applicant was again placed off of work, on total temporary disability, with ongoing complaints of neck and shoulder pain. On June 26, 2013, the applicant was again placed off of work, on total temporary disability, via a handwritten progress note. On August 15, 2013, the applicant was asked to pursue another epidural steroid injection. The applicant's medication list was not furnished.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cervical epidural injection C6-7: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injections (ESIs).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines page 46, Epidural Steroid Injections topic.2. MTUS 9792.20f. Page(s): 46.

Decision rationale: The request in question represents a request for repeat epidural steroid injection therapy. As noted on page 46 of the Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, however, repeat blocks should be predicated on evidence of functional improvement and lasting analgesia with earlier blocks. In this case, however, the applicant's failure to return to any form of work implies a lack of functional improvement as defined in despite completion of at least two prior cervical epidural steroid injections at the level in question, C6-C7, as do the applicant's continued reports of difficulty performing even basic activities of daily living such as a lifting a gallon of milk and driving a car. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.