

Case Number:	CM13-0048241		
Date Assigned:	06/09/2014	Date of Injury:	04/10/2012
Decision Date:	07/30/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/28/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/05/2013

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 Anesthesiology, Pain Medicine and is licensed to practice in Florida. 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 injured worker is a 59-year-old female with a reported injury on 04/10/2012. The injured worker sustained an injury to her back during the course of her work. Initially, she had conservative treatment including physical therapy, medication, modification of activities, and pain management. She continued to have severity of disc extrusion and stenosis and continued pain. The injured worker had an L4-5 discectomy, decompression, and laminotomy on 08/01/2012. Other treatments also included physical therapy twice a week for 8 to 10 visits. She was taking Norco. She also had chiropractic sessions. She did have a previous median branch block on 03/20/2013 of the right L5-S1 and L4-5. It was helpful at that time, although now she is complaining that the pain has returned. After the median branch block, there was no indication that she had a facet neurotomy. Her diagnoses consisted of facet syndrome L4-5, L5-S1 right lumbar; status post left L4-5 laminectomy and discectomy with good resolution of left-sided symptoms; and depression. The recommended plan of treatment was to request for the right L4-5 and L5-S1 median branch facet blocks under fluoroscopic guidance for diagnostic testing, and also to refill her Norco. The request was signed and dated on 03/17/2014.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

RIGHT FACET MEDIAN BRANCH BLOCK L4-5 AND L5-S1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Injection, facet joint diagnostic blocks.

Decision rationale: The right facet median branch block to L4-5 and L5-S1 is non-certified. The injured worker has been complaining of continued back pain. She did have an L4-5 discectomy, decompression, and laminotomy on 08/01/2012. She also has a history of right L5-S1 and L4-5 median branch blocks on 03/20/2013. The California MTUS Guidelines and the ACOEM Guidelines do not address this issue, but the Official Disability Guidelines do recommend no more than 1 set of medial branch diagnostic blocks prior to a facet neurotomy. There is no record of any facet neurotomy that has been performed. The guidelines also do state that there needs to be documentation of the failure of conservative treatment including home exercise, physical therapy, and NSAIDs prior to the procedure for at least 4 to 6 weeks. The record does mention that the patient has exhausted the conservative treatment, but it does not specify as to whether it was physical therapy, NSAIDs, and/or the home exercise program, and also there was no efficacy of those programs. Therefore, the request for the right facet median branch block is non-certified.