

Case Number:	CM13-0068510		
Date Assigned:	05/07/2014	Date of Injury:	12/14/2000
Decision Date:	06/12/2014	UR Denial Date:	11/15/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/19/2013

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 Internal Medicine & Emergency 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:

This patient is a 36 year-old with a date of injury of 12/14/00. A progress report associated with the request for services, dated 10/10/13, identified subjective complaints of neck pain radiating into the right arm. Objective findings included normal range-of-motion of the cervical spine. Decreased sensation was described in the C5-C7 distributions. However, examination did not reveal any sensory loss. Motor function and reflexes were normal. MRI revealed disc bulging. Diagnoses included cervical disc disease. Treatment included previous chiropractic. It was stated that she was on no medications. A Utilization Review determination was rendered on 11/15/13 recommending non-certification of "1 cervical epidural steroid injection at C5 C6 and C7".

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 CERVICAL EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION AT C5 C6 AND C7: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injections Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG).

Decision rationale: The MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines note that epidural steroids injections (ESI) offer short-term relief from radicular pain, but do not affect impairment or need for surgery. Criteria for ESIs include radiculopathy documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. The Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) states that epidural steroid injections of the neck are recommended as an option for radicular pain. A study showed improvement in pain and function at 4 weeks and also at one year. Criteria for use include: Objective findings of radiculopathy corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing; Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment (exercises, physical methods, NSAIDs, and muscle relaxants); They should be done using fluoroscopy; During the diagnostic phase, a maximum of one to two injections and the second block is not indicated if there is an inadequate response to the first block; No more than two nerve roots should be injected using transforaminal blocks and no more than one interlaminar level during one session; If there is a documented response to the diagnostic blocks (50% pain relief for at least 6-8 weeks), then up to 4 blocks per region per year may be used; Current research does not support "series-of-three" injections. The claimant does not meet the above criteria. The record does not document objective findings of a radiculopathy. Likewise, there is no corroboration on MRI or with electrodiagnostic studies. As well, there is insufficient documentation for prior conservative therapy. Therefore, the request for 1 cervical epidural steroid injection at C5, C6, and C7 is not medically necessary and appropriate.