

Case Number:	CM14-0105282		
Date Assigned:	07/30/2014	Date of Injury:	03/09/2012
Decision Date:	09/03/2014	UR Denial Date:	06/25/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/07/2014

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, has a subspecialty in Pain Management 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:

According to the records made available for review, this is a 45-year-old male with a 3/9/12 date of injury, and status post L3-S1 microdecompression and L4-S1 microdiscectomy 10/12/12. At the time (6/25/14) of request for authorization for cervical epidural injection C6-7, there is documentation of subjective (significant recurrent of neck and upper extremity symptoms; intermittent moderate neck pain with radiation to the arms bilaterally to the fingertips, numbness and tingling in the hands bilaterally) and objective (spasm and tenderness over the cervical spine, pain with range of motion, deep tendon reflexes and motor examination within normal limits, decreased sensation noted over the C6 distribution which is more prominent on the right side) findings, imaging findings (cervical spine MRI (2/23/13) report revealed C6-7 mild diffuse disc bulging with a small central protrusion noted, no mass effect upon the cord is identifies, the foramina patent bilaterally), current diagnoses (exacerbated cervical pain with radiculopathy), and treatment to date (activity modification and cervical epidural steroid injection 3/14). 5/19/14 medical report identifies that the patient had significant improvement for a few weeks with cervical epidural steroid injection done March 2014. There is no documentation of at least 50-70% pain relief for six to eight weeks following previous injection, as well as decreased need for pain medications, and functional response with previous cervical epidural steroid injection.

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 Page(s): 46 of 127.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 175. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck & Upper Back Chapter, Epidural Steroid Injections (ESIs).

Decision rationale: The MTUS reference to ACOEM guidelines identifies cervical epidural corticosteroid injections should be reserved for patients who otherwise would undergo open surgical procedures for nerve root compromise. The ODG identifies documentation of at least 50-70% pain relief for six to eight weeks, with a general recommendation of no more than 4 blocks per region per year, as well as decreased need for pain medications, and functional response, as criteria necessary to support the medical necessity of additional epidural steroid injections. Within the medical information available for review, there is documentation of diagnoses of exacerbated cervical pain with radiculopathy. However, despite documentation that the patient had significant improvement for a few weeks with previous cervical epidural steroid injection, there is no documentation of at least 50-70% pain relief for six to eight weeks following previous injection, as well as decreased need for pain medications, and functional response with previous cervical epidural steroid injection. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for cervical epidural injection C6-7 is not medically necessary.