

Case Number:	CM14-0170871		
Date Assigned:	10/23/2014	Date of Injury:	09/03/2013
Decision Date:	11/21/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/19/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/16/2014

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 Preventive 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:

According to the records made available for review, this is a 40-year-old male with a 9/3/13 date of injury. At the time (8/20/14) of request for authorization for second thoracic spine epidural steroid injection T6-7 under fluoroscopy, there is documentation of subjective (neck pain radiating to the right trapezius) and objective (mildly restricted cervical range of motion with pain and tenderness over the right trapezius) findings, current diagnoses (thoracic strain and thoracic disc protrusion), and treatment to date (medications, physical therapy, and previous epidural steroid injection (8/11/14)). Medical report identifies that the patient is experiencing worse pain. There is no documentation of at least 50-70% pain relief for six to eight weeks, as well as decreased need for pain medications and functional response following previous injection.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Second thoracic spine epidural steroid injection T6-7 under fluoroscopy: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines epidural steroid injection (ESIs) Page(s): 46.

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: 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. 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 thoracic strain and thoracic disc protrusion. In addition, there is documentation of previous thoracic epidural steroid injection (8/11/14). However, given documentation that the patient is experiencing worse pain, there is no documentation of at least 50-70% pain relief for six to eight weeks, as well as decreased need for pain medications and functional response following previous injection. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for second thoracic spine epidural steroid injection T6-7 under fluoroscopy is not medically necessary.