

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0170880		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/23/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	10/22/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	11/21/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/10/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	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 Anesthesiology; has a subspecialty in Pain Medicine and is licensed to practice in Connecticut. 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:

After careful review of the medical records, this is a 30 year old male with complaints of low back pain. The date of injury is 10/22/13 and the mechanism of injury is bending over/pulling injury (as he was bent over picking celery) leading to his current symptoms. At the time of request for medial branch block right side L4-5 and L5-S1, there is subjective (low back pain) and objective (restricted range of motion lumbar spine, tenderness to palpation lumbar spine, bilateral SI joint tenderness, decreased sensory left L3 dermatome) findings, imaging findings (MRI lumbar spine 6/2/14 shows spondylosis L2-3,L3-4,L5-S1, disc protrusion/annular tear L5-S1), diagnoses (discogenic low back pain, sacroiliitis, lumbar herniated disc, lumbar facet arthropathy), and treatment to date (chiropractic care, acupuncture, physical therapy, medications). Facet medial branch block injections are recommended for diagnostic purposes prior to facet radiofrequency neurotomy. The technique for MBB is (in this specific case) for L5-S1 to block the medial branches of the posterior rami at the levels L4,L5 as well as at the superior articular process at S1. The volume of injectate local anesthetic must be kept to 0.5cc as to prevent the spread of local anesthetic from anesthetizing adjacent nerves and hence confound the ability to identify the facet pain generator. Criteria for facet blocks include greater than 70% pain relief that last at least 2 hours for lidocaine. No more than 2 facet levels are injected in a single session. Volume of injectate should be limited to 0.5cc or less. This should be reserved for back pain only with no radicular component. There should be documentation of failure of more conservative therapy. There should be a patient log document of the results of the procedure documenting VAS scores before and after, amount of pain relief from the pre-procedure baseline, and any pain medications that are taken during the post procedure period (or should document that the medications should/were held for that period of time). There should be a

comprehensive plan with the intent to do facet neurotomy pending successful results from the facet diagnostic blocks and potentially more formal therapy or self directed therapy.

### **IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES**

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

#### **Medial branch block for right side L4-5 and L5-S1: Overturned**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic)

**MAXIMUS guideline:** The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low back - Lumbar&Thoracic(Acute&Chronic), Facet Joint Diagnostic Blocks

**Decision rationale:** Per ODG treatment decisions, Facet medial branch block injections are recommended for diagnostic purposes prior to facet radiofrequency neurotomy. The technique for MBB is (in this specific case) for L5-S1 to block the medial branches of the posterior rami at the levels L4,L5 as well as at the superior articular process at S1. The volume of injectate local anesthetic must be kept to 0.5cc as to prevent the spread of local anesthetic from anesthetizing adjacent nerves and hence confound the ability to identify the facet pain generator. Criteria for facet blocks include greater than 70% pain relief that last at least 2 hours for lidocaine. No more than 2 facet levels are injected in a single session. Volume of injectate should be limited to 0.5cc or less. This should be reserved for back pain only with no radicular component. There should be documentation of failure of more conservative therapy. There should be a patient log document of the results of the procedure documenting VAS scores before and after, amount of pain relief from the pre-procedure baseline, and any pain medications that are taken during the post procedure period (or should document that the medications should/were held for that period of time). There should be a comprehensive plan with the intent to do facet neurotomy pending successful results from the facet diagnostic blocks and potentially more formal therapy or self directed therapy. Therefore, the requested diagnostic facet blocks L4-5 and L5-S1 are medically necessary.