

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0174443		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/28/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	01/20/2006
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/16/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	09/30/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/23/2014

### 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 Internal Medicine, has a subspecialty in Rheumatology and is licensed to practice in Maryland. 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 patient is a 30 year old female with date of injury 1/20/2006. The mechanism of injury is not stated in the available medical record. The patient has complained of low back pain since the date of injury. She has been treated with medications, physical therapy and epidural steroid injections. She is status post lumbar decompression and fusion surgery at L5-S1 in 10/2014. MRI of the lumbar spine dated 10/2014 revealed L5-S1 disc dessication (noted to be stable) with 3 mm disc protrusion (noted to be stable); no neuroforaminal encroachment and no findings of spinal stenosis. Objective: decreased and painful range of motion of the lumbar spine; tenderness to palpation of the bilateral lumbar spine musculature. Diagnoses: lumbar spondylosis. Treatment plan and request: bilateral lumbar nerve root block at L4-5.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

#### **1 bilateral lumbar nerve root block at L4-5: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs) Criteria for the use of Epidura.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural injections Page(s): 46.

**Decision rationale:** This 30 year old female has complained of low back pain since date of injury 1/20/2006. She has been treated with medications, physical therapy and epidural steroid injections as well as lumbar decompression and fusion surgery at L5-S1 in 10/2014. The current request is for bilateral lumbar nerve root block at L4-5. Per the MTUS guidelines cited above epidural injections are recommended as an option for the treatment of radicular pain when the specific following criteria are met: 1) Radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. 2) Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment (exercises, physical methods, NSAIDs and muscle relaxants) 3) Injections should be performed using fluoroscopy (live x-ray) for guidance 4) If used for diagnostic purposes, a maximum of two injections should be performed. A second block is not recommended if there is inadequate response to the first block. Diagnostic blocks should be at an interval of at least one to two weeks between injections. 5) No more than two nerve root levels should be injected using transforaminal blocks. 6) No more than one interlaminar level should be injected at one session. 7) In the therapeutic phase, repeat blocks should be based on continued objective documented pain and functional improvement, including at least 50% pain relief with associated reduction of medication use for six to eight weeks, with a general recommendation of no more than 4 blocks per region per year. (Manchikanti, 2003) (CMS, 2004) (Boswell, 2007) 8) Current research does not support "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 injections. The available medical records do not include documentation that criteria (1) above has been met. Specifically, the available provider notes do not document evidence of radiculopathy by physical examination that is corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. On the basis of the MTUS guidelines and the available provider documentation, bilateral lumbar nerve root block at L4-5 is not indicated as medically necessary.