

Case Number:	CM14-0174756		
Date Assigned:	10/28/2014	Date of Injury:	04/02/1980
Decision Date:	12/04/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/27/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/22/2014

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 Anesthesia, has a subspecialty in Acupuncture & Pain 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:

This is a 76 year old male injured worker with date of injury 4/2/80 with related low back pain. Per progress report dated 9/3/14, physical exam revealed tenderness to the cervical and lumbar paravertebral musculature with limited lumbar ranges of motion and neurological deficits. Previous epidural steroid injection performed on 6/26/14 caused 80% relief of pain. MRI of the lumbar spine (date unknown) revealed at L1-L2 a disc osteophyte complex with superimposed disc extrusion to the right which markedly narrowed the right lateral recess and there was severe narrowing of the right neural foramina with impingement upon the exiting L1 nerve root. Treatment to date has included surgery, epidural steroid injection, physical therapy, and medication management. The date of UR decision was 9/27/14.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lumbar Epidural Injection at The Right L1-2 and L4-5: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS CPMTG epidural steroid injections are used to reduce pain and inflammation, restoring range of motion and thereby facilitating progress in more active treatment programs and avoiding surgery, but this treatment alone offers no significant long-term benefit. The criteria for the use of epidural steroid injections are as follows: 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 a "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections. Per progress report dated 7/9/14, the injured worker reported 80% relief after his last epidural, however, there was no documentation of duration or associated reduction in medication. Furthermore, the MRI studies available for review do not contain evidence of radiculopathy at L4-L5. The request is not medically necessary.