

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0177399		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/30/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/05/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/09/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/03/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/27/2014

### 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 57 year old female with date of injury 3/5/2014. The mechanism of injury is stated as lifting a heavy object. The patient has complained of lower back pain with radiation of pain to the bilateral legs, left greater than right. She has been treated with physical therapy and medications. MRI of the lumbar spine performed in 06/2014, showed multilevel disc disease, facet hypertrophy and moderate canal stenosis, most significant at L2-3 and L3-4. Objective: decreased and painful range of motion of the lumbar spine, tenderness to palpation of the lower back down to the sciatic notch bilaterally and bilateral positive straight leg raise. Diagnoses: lumbar strain, lumbar disc disease, lumbar spondylosis. Treatment plan and request: Lumbar spine epidural injection at L2-3.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

#### **Lumbar epidural steroid injection L2-L3: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for the Use of Epidural Steroid Injections Page(s): 46.

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

**Decision rationale:** This 57 year old female has complained of lower back pain with radiation of pain to the bilateral legs, left greater than right since date of injury 3/5/2014. She has been treated with physical therapy and medications. The current request is for lumbar epidural steroid injection at L2-3. Per the MTUS guideline cited above, the following criteria must be met for an epidural steroid injection to be considered medically necessary: 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. The available medical records do not include documentation that meet criteria (1) above. Specifically, there is no documentation of evidence of a radiculopathy by physical examination and corroboration by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. On the basis of the above MTUS guidelines and available provider documentation, epidural steroid injection of L2-3 is not indicated as medically necessary.