

Case Number:	CM14-0031111		
Date Assigned:	06/20/2014	Date of Injury:	01/03/2006
Decision Date:	07/25/2014	UR Denial Date:	02/12/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/12/2014

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 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and is licensed to practice in Texas. 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 55 year old male with an industrial injury date of 1/03/2006. Mechanism of injury is not provided. A prior UR determination dated 2/12/2014 noncertified the requested bilateral C4-5, C5-6 facet injections. Per the review, there was no indication to proceed with another diagnostic facet block and there was no mention of any recent or prior attendance in active therapy to suggest failure of active therapy. Cervical spine MRI performed on 3/27/2013 revealed provided the impression: Multilevel spondylosis, mildly reversal of normal cervical lordosis and congenital stenosis with spinal canal narrowing causing moderate spinal stenosis at the C4-5, C5-6 and mild spinal stenosis at C6-7 and C3-4 levels. Foraminal narrowing as described above. According to the PR-2 reports dated 3/16/2014, the patient complains of 6/10 pain without medications. He complains of trouble sleeping due to neck pain getting worse. Physical examination findings include paravertebral spasm, - ROM cervical + pain to ROM, - ROM right shoulder. Treatment plan indicates home exercise and medications as needed: Motrin, flector patch, Vicodin ES, and Valium. According to the letter dated 3/11/2014, the letter serves as confirmation of ongoing treatment of the patient's work injury since 1/04/2005. He was last seen and examined on 2/24/2014. At this visit, his pain level was 8/10, sometimes as high as 10/10. He has numbness and tingling in the right arm and hand with weakness in the extremity. The letter states the patient has exhibited very good results of pain alleviation from previous intra-articular facet corticosteroid injections. According to the encounter note dated 1/23/2014, the patient returned for follow-up. He had cervical facet injections done in the distant past, he had 15-16 months relief, 99%. He subsequently was injected on 9/12/2011 with 15-16 months relief, 99%. He did not get relief from medial branch blocks on 12/20/2013. Actually flared his pain. Reports pain rated 5-6/10, pain in the neck and shoulders. Occasional numbness in the hands. Physical examination documents patient can flex forward chin 3 fingerbreaths away from

chest, extends occiput 4 fingerbreaths away from back, rotation is full bilaterally, lateral bending 20 degrees bilaterally, full extension is not painful, but extension with lateral bending to compress facets flares symptoms bilaterally. Motor is 5/5, DTRs equal and symmetrical, sensation is intact. The patient wants to proceed with facet injections. He was dispensed valium, Motrin 800mg and Flexeril. According to the medical report and procedure report dated 12/20/2013, the patient was referred for diagnostic cervical medial branch blocks under fluoroscopy will check. He was administered right C4-5 and C5-6 joint under local anesthesia. Pre-injection pain with flexion 7/10, extension 8/10, right rotation, coupled with extension 0/10 and post injection flexion and extension 8/10, right rotation, coupled with extension 0/10. The patient did not have significant immediate relief from the procedure, based on this, cervical facet rhizotomy is not recommended. However, repeat cervical facet joint injection are recommended because the patient demonstrated 15 months of good pain relief with intra-articular facet corticosteroids.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

BILATERAL C 4-5; C 5-6 FACET INJECTIONS QTY 2: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation OFFICIAL DISABILITY GUIDELINES - TREATMENT FOR WORKERS COMPENSATION - ON LINE EDITION- NECK AND UPPER BACK.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck, Facet joint therapeutic steroid injections.

Decision rationale: Facet joint therapeutic steroid injections are not recommended. Regarding intra-articular blocks, there are no reports from quality studies regarding the effect of intra-articular steroid injections are currently known. There are also no comparative studies between intra-articular blocks and rhizotomy. The medical records document the patient has undergone cervical facet blocks in the past. It is claimed that he had very good response to those procedures. Although, there is no indication that medication use was decreased/stopped, or returned to work. He underwent cervical medial branch block, and did not obtain any benefit from the procedure. Therapeutic facet joint injections are not recommended under the guidelines, in addition, the patient has already undergone MBB procedure without benefit results, and so he is not a candidate for neurotomy. In addition, there is no evidence of a formal plan of rehabilitation, such as therapy. Request is not medically necessary.