

Case Number:	CM14-0032626		
Date Assigned:	06/23/2014	Date of Injury:	05/19/2010
Decision Date:	07/31/2014	UR Denial Date:	03/07/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/14/2014

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 Management, 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:

According to the records made available for review, this is a 55-year-old male with a 5/9/10 date of injury. At the time (2/19/14) of request for authorization for lumbar epidural steroid injection, there is documentation of subjective (chronic low back pain) and objective (normal strength, sensation, and reflexes in the bilateral lower extremities) findings. Imaging findings include lumbar MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) (10/17/13) report revealed moderate left and mild right neural foraminal stenosis, and mild spinal canal stenosis at L4-5; and mild spinal canal stenosis at L5-S1. The current diagnoses are lumbar spinal stenosis and degenerative disc disease. The treatment to date include lumbar epidural steroid injection at L4-5 on 11/15/13; medication, physical modalities, and activity modification. In addition, the medical report plan identifies repeat lumbar epidural steroid injection at L4-5. There is no documentation of at least 50-70% pain relief for six to eight weeks, as well as decreased need for pain medications following previous injection.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lumbar Epidural Steroid injection by [REDACTED]: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300, Table 12-8, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back, Epidural Steroid Injections (ESIs).

Decision rationale: The MTUS reference to ACOEM guidelines identifies documentations of objective radiculopathy in an effort to avoid surgery as criteria necessary to support the medical necessity of epidural steroid injections. The Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) identifies documentation of at least 50-70% pain relief for six to eight weeks, with a general recommendation of no more than four blocks per region per year, as well as decreased need for pain medications, and functional response as criteria necessary to support the medical necessity of additional epidural steroid injections. Within the medical information available for review, there is documentation of diagnoses of lumbar spinal stenosis and degenerative disc disease. In addition, there is documentation of a plan identifying repeat lumbar epidural steroid injection at L4-5. Furthermore, there is documentation of a previous lumbar epidural steroid injection at L4-5 performed on 11/15/13. However, there is no documentation of at least 50-70% pain relief for six to eight weeks, as well as decreased need for pain medications following previous injection. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for lumbar epidural steroid injection is not medically necessary.