

Case Number:	CM14-0050856		
Date Assigned:	07/07/2014	Date of Injury:	11/19/2012
Decision Date:	08/29/2014	UR Denial Date:	03/26/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/18/2014

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 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:

The injured worker is an 80-year-old male who reported an injury on 11/19/2012 while putting away chairs during the performance of normal job duties. The injured worker reportedly sustained an injury to his right knee, foot and low back. The injured worker's treatment history included physical therapy, injection therapy, medications, and chiropractic care. He underwent a lumbar facet medial branch block at the right L2, L3 and L4 on 10/03/2013 that resulted in a reduction in pain to a 1-2/10 for 3 days. He was evaluated on 02/21/2014 and the physical findings included increased pain with extension, positive facet challenge, and tenderness to palpation over the right-sided L3-4 and L4-5 facets. His diagnoses included herniated disc of the lumbar spine, right L4, L5 and S1 radiculopathy, and degenerative disc disease of the lumbar spine. A request was made for a rhizotomy of the right side at the L3-4 and L4-5 due to the injured worker's substantial relief to the medial branch block provided. The injured worker was again evaluated on 03/12/2014. It was noted that he had received a non-authorization for the requested rhizotomy. Therefore, a second medial branch block was requested which was reportedly consistent with the most recent agreed medical evaluator's recommendations.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 Lumbar Rhizotomy on the right at L3-4 and L4-5: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300-301. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Low Back- Lumbar and Thoracic (Acute and Chronic).

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 Chapter, Facet joint radiofrequency neurotomy.

Decision rationale: The request for a 1 lumbar rhizotomy on the right at the L3-4 and L4-5 is not medically necessary or appropriate. The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine recommend lumbar facet rhizotomies after the injured worker has an appropriate response to a medial branch block. The injured worker did have a reduction in pain resulting from the previous medial branch block at the right L3-4 and L4-5. However, the Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) further recommends documentation of functional improvement or medication reduction resulting from the medial branch block. The clinical documentation does not provide any evidence that the injured worker had an increase in function resulting from the medial branch block in 10/2013. Therefore, the appropriateness of a lumbar rhizotomy cannot be adequately assessed. As such, the requested lumbar rhizotomy on the right L3-4 and L4-5 is not medically necessary or appropriate.