

Case Number:	CM14-0061453		
Date Assigned:	07/25/2014	Date of Injury:	08/03/2009
Decision Date:	08/28/2014	UR Denial Date:	04/18/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/02/2014

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 Georgia. 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 claimant is a 50 year old female presenting with chronic pain following a work related injury on 08/03/2009. On 04/10/2014, the claimant reported neck pain, right shoulder pain, right elbow pain, right hand pain, right hand numbness, and tingling left hand pain the claimant described as the pain as dull, sharp, constant and severe. The claimant reported radiation of pain in the right upper extremity. The claimant's medication includes Flexeril, Advair Diskus, Celexa, Lyrica, Omeprazole, Oxycodone and Glucasamine. MRI of the cervical spine showed straightening of cervical lordosis, disc desiccation seen throughout cervical spine, C3-4 diffuse disc protrusion having osteophytic complex with effacement of the thecal sac, bilateral facet joint and uncinated hypertrophy is visualized, C4-5 diffuse disc protrusion having osteophytic complex with effacement of the thecal sac, bilateral facet joint and uncinated hypertrophy, diffuse disc protrusion having osteophytic complex with effacement of the thecal sac, narrowing of the right lateral recess without effacement of the right C5 transiting nerve root. Electrodiagnostic studies, showed mild carpal tunnel syndrome on the left, ulnar neuropathy, at or near the elbow on the right. The physical exam was unremarkable. A claim was made for cervical epidural #3.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cervical Epidurals #3: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injection Page(s): 47.

Decision rationale: Cervical Epidurals #3 is not medically necessary. The California MTUS page 47 states the purpose of epidural steroid injections is 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 is no significant long-term functional benefit. Radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment, injections should be performed using fluoroscopy; if the ESI is for diagnostic purposes a maximum of 2 injections should be performed. No more than 2 nerve root levels should be injected using transforaminal blocks. No more than 1 interlaminar level should be injected at one session. 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 6-8 weeks, with the general recommendation of no more than 4 blocks per region per year. Current research does not support a series of 3 injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 epidural steroid injections. The physical exam does not corroborate cervical radiculopathy for which the procedure was requested. Additionally, the epidural levels are not indicated and MTUS guidelines only recommends a maximum of 2 for diagnostic purposes; therefore, the requested service is not medically necessary.