

Case Number:	CM14-0064462		
Date Assigned:	07/14/2014	Date of Injury:	04/01/2009
Decision Date:	11/18/2014	UR Denial Date:	04/23/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/07/2014

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 Orthopaedic Spine Surgery, and is licensed to practice in New York. 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 has a history of chronic neck pain. She first noticed her pain in April 2009. She also reports headaches. NSAID medication has improved her pain. Patient is also had physical therapy. She's been transitioned to a home exercise program. On physical examination she has normal motor and sensory function in the upper extremities. Neck range of motion is diminished. Facet maneuvers are positive on the right side at C5-6 and C6-7. She has a painful range of neck motion. MRI the cervical spine shows mild to moderate facet arthropathy most significant at C5-C6. There is also mild stenosis at C5-C6. Patient continues to have pain despite exercise and medications. At issue is whether medial branch block is medically necessary.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cervical medial branch blocks C5-6, C6-7: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low back pain chapter, and Neck pain chapter

Decision rationale: The medical records indicate that this patient has had neck pain since 2009. The records do not indicate that she's had a recent trial and failure of adequate physical therapy for neck pain. ODG guidelines recommend medial branch blocks prior to facet rhizotomy only in cases where the patient has exhausted conservative measures. In this case is not clear the medical records that the patient has recently exhausted conservative measures for the treatment of chronic neck pain. More conservative measures in the form of adequate physical therapy medically necessary. Guidelines do not support medial branch blocks at this time for this patient.