

Case Number:	CM14-0081324		
Date Assigned:	07/18/2014	Date of Injury:	09/18/2008
Decision Date:	11/17/2014	UR Denial Date:	05/01/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/02/2014

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 33 year old female presenting with chronic pain following a work related injury on 09/01/2008. The claimant was treated with modified duty, chiropractor care, acupuncture, medications, pain management consult and physical therapy. MRI of the lumbar spine showed L4-5 disc dessication, L5-S1 disc dessication and diminished disc height, 3-4mm central focal disc protrusion with an annular tear, bilateral facet arthropathy with narrowing of the thecal sac and spinal canal. EMG of the lower extremities were normal and NCV was abnormal for the lower extremities suggestive of bilateral peroneal neuropathy. The physical exam showed paravertebral muscle tenderness, tight muscle band and trigger point on the left side, positive straight leg raising test on the left. The claimant was diagnosed with chronic low back pain, lumbar degenerative disk disease and lumbar radiculitis. A claim was placed for L4-5 and L5-S1 Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection (TFESI).

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

L4-L5 TFESI: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: L4-5 Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection 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 and MRI results does corroborate lumbar radiculitis for which the procedure was requested; however there was lack of documentation of failed conservative therapy as outlined by MTUS guidelines. The requested L4-L5 Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection is not medically necessary.

L5-S1 TFESI: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: L5-S1 Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection is not medically 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 and MRI results does corroborate lumbar radiculitis for which the procedure was requested; however there was lack of documentation of failed conservative therapy as outlined by MTUS guidelines. The requested L5-S1 Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection is not medically necessary.

