

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0181511		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	11/06/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	05/11/2005
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/23/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/01/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/31/2014

### 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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:

State(s) of Licensure: Indiana

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine

### 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 a 42 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 5/11/05. The injured worker was diagnosed as having low back pain; lumbar degenerative disc disease. Treatment to date has included status post lumbar fusion at L4-5 and L5-S1 with instrumentation/PLIF cages (9/2006); x-rays lumbar spine (7/18/14); physical therapy; medications. Currently, the PR-2 dated 9/5/14, the injured worker complains of constant, piercing low back pain that radiates to the bilateral lower extremities with the right worse than the left; no numbness or tingling sensations. The injured worker is taking Norco, which relieves some pain, but has trouble sleeping due to the pain. The provider is requesting lumbar spine epidural steroid injection at L3-L4 level due to degenerative lumbar spine changes.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Epidural Injection at L3-L4, lumbar spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs) Page(s): 46.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines ESI Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS

Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Epidural steroid injections (ESIs), therapeutic.

**Decision rationale:** MTUS Chronic pain medical treatment guidelines state that epidural steroid injections are "Recommended as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy) . . . Epidural steroid injection can offer short term pain relief and use should be in conjunction with other rehab efforts, including continuing a home exercise program." There were no medical documents provided to conclude that other rehab efforts or home exercise program is ongoing. Additionally, no objective findings were documented to specify the dermatomal distribution of pain. MTUS further defines the criteria for epidural steroid injections to include: 1) Radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. 2) Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment (exercises, physical methods, NSAIDs and muscle relaxants). 3) Injections should be performed using fluoroscopy (live x-ray) for guidance. 4) If used for diagnostic purposes, a maximum of two injections should be performed. A second block is not recommended if there is inadequate response to the first block. Diagnostic blocks should be at an interval of at least one to two weeks between injections. 5) No more than two nerve root levels should be injected using transforaminal blocks. 6) No more than one interlaminar level should be injected at one session. 7) 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 six to eight weeks, with a general recommendation of no more than 4 blocks per region per year. (Manchikanti, 2003) (CMS, 2004) (Boswell, 2007) 8) Current research does not support a "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections. Radiculopathy does appear to be documented with imaging studies. The patient is taking multiple medications, but the progress reports do not document how long the patient has been on these medications and the "unresponsiveness" to the medications. Additionally, treatment notes do not indicate if other conservative treatments were tried and failed (exercises, physical therapy, etc). As such, the request is not medically necessary.