

Case Number:	CM14-0194451		
Date Assigned:	12/02/2014	Date of Injury:	09/25/2001
Decision Date:	01/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/03/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/20/2014

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 Medicine and is licensed to practice in Texas. 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:

This is a 49 year old female patient with an injury date of 09/24/2001, no description of mechanism of injury and status post failed back surgery syndrome from failed lumbar discectomy and spinal fusion at L5-S-1. On 10/22/2014, [REDACTED] noted subjective complaints of low back pain without sciatica symptoms. There were objective findings with significant muscle spasm to lower back area, scar from prior surgery and tenderness over the lower lumbar facet joints. The range of motion showed markedly positive facet maneuvers again at bilateral L3-4 and L4-5 (levels above the fusion). Straight leg raise noted with negative results and strength limited but within normal limits. The patient noted without any radicular complaint. She was diagnosed with lumbar facet syndrome, lumbosacral pain, and past thoracic of lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis. There was documentation of 70-75% reduction in pain, improved in function and reduction in medication utilization for 2 years following a 2012 lumbar facet ablation. The medications are listed as Desipramine and Voltaren. A request for a bilateral lumbar L3-4 and L4-5 facet joint radiofrequency ablation was made on 10/22/2014. A Utilization Review denied the request for services on 11/03/2014 as not meeting medical necessity requirements.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Bilateral L3-4 and L4-5 facet joint thermal radiofrequency ablation, 2 dates of service, right side first to be followed by the left side, 2 weeks later: Overturned

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

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

Decision rationale: The CA MTUS did not address the treatment of lumbar facet syndrome with radiofrequency ablation procedure. The ODG guidelines recommend that lumbar facet radiofrequency ablation can be repeated if there is documentation of significant pain relief following a prior ablation procedure. The records indicate that the patient had subjective and objective findings consistent with lumbar facet syndrome despite a prior history of lumbar fusion and radiculopathy. There is no current clinical finding consistent with lumbar radiculopathy. There is documentation of significant pain relief following 2012 lumbar facet radiofrequency ablation procedures. The guidelines recommend that same day bilateral ablation procedures be avoided because of potential increased risk of complications associated with destructive procedures. The criteria for bilateral L3-L4 and L4-L5 radiofrequency ablation on 2 dates of service, Right then Left, 2 weeks apart was met.