

Case Number:	CM14-0200455		
Date Assigned:	12/11/2014	Date of Injury:	08/21/1999
Decision Date:	03/19/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/11/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/01/2014

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: Maryland

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Rheumatology

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 55 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 8/21/99. She has reported low back pain. The diagnoses have included anxiety about behavior and comfort alteration. Treatment to date has included lumbar fusion, physical therapy and medications. Currently, the injured worker complains of moderate to severe pain. Physical exam dated 4/19/13 revealed prior posterior L4-5 lumbar interbody fusion. On 11/11/14 Utilization Review non-certified C5-6 cervical steroid injection with monitored anesthesia, noting the (MRI) magnetic resonance imaging report was not submitted and there was not documentation of radiculopathy. The MTUS, ACOEM Guidelines, was cited. On 12/1/14, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of C5-6 cervical steroid injection with monitored anesthesia.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Injection C5-C6 Cervical Steroid Injection, Monitored Anesthesia care and Epidurography: 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 Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

Decision rationale: This 55 year old female has complained of neck pain and low back pain since date of injury 8/21/99. She has been treated with lumbar fusion surgery, physical therapy and medications. The current request is for C5-6 cervical steroid injection with anesthesia and epidurography. Per the MTUS guideline cited above, the following criteria must be met for an epidural steroid injection to be considered medically necessary: 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. The available medical records do not include documentation that meet criteria (1) above. Specifically, radiculopathy was not documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. On the basis of the above MTUS guidelines and available provider documentation, C5-6 cervical steroid injection, monitored anesthesia and epidurography is not indicated as medically necessary.