

Case Number:	CM14-0206984		
Date Assigned:	12/19/2014	Date of Injury:	08/30/2013
Decision Date:	02/12/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/11/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/10/2014

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 Emergency Medicine 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 is a 44-year-old female who was injured on August 30, 2013. The patient continued to experience pain in lower lumbar region. Physical examination was notable for positive Hoffman sign, right paraspinal muscle spasm and tenderness, positive right straight leg raise, and mild weakness of the right extensor hallucis longus. EMG is supportive of chronic L5 nerve root irritation. MRI of the lumbar spine dated June 23, 2014 reported a 2 mm disc bulge at L4-5 with no nerve root compromise and 3-4 mm disc bulge at L5-S1 with compromise of exiting nerve roots bilaterally, right > left. Diagnoses included chronic low back pain, lumbar degenerative disc disease, and lumbar radiculitis. Treatment included medications and physical therapy. Request for authorization for transaminal epidural steroid injection at right L4-5 and L5-S1 was submitted for consideration.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection (ESI) Right L4-L5, L5-S1: 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 Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 46.

Decision rationale: Epidural steroid injections are recommended as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy). Radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. 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 is little information on improved function. The American Academy of Neurology recently concluded that epidural steroid injections may lead to an improvement in radicular lumbosacral pain between 2 and 6 weeks following the injection, but they do not affect impairment of function or the need for surgery and do not provide long-term pain relief beyond 3 months, and there is insufficient evidence to make any recommendation for the use of epidural steroid injections to treat radicular cervical pain. In this case, the diagnosis of radiculopathy is not supported by the documentation of the physical examination and is not corroborated by imaging or electrodiagnostic studies. Criteria for epidural steroid injections have not been met. The request is not medically necessary.