

Case Number:	CM14-0096918		
Date Assigned:	07/28/2014	Date of Injury:	09/04/2011
Decision Date:	05/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/18/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/25/2014

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: Arizona, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 61 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 9/04/2011. Diagnoses include lumbago, radiculitis and L3/4 stenosis. Treatment to date has included diagnostics and medications. An MRI on 3/3/12 indicated the claimant had an L3/L4 disc herniation. Per the Secondary Treating Physician's Progress Report dated 5/19/2014 the injured worker reported ongoing pain in the lumbar spine. He reports occasional bilateral pain extending from the lower back to buttocks and hamstrings. He has foot pain, worse on the left. He notes right thigh numbness and pain in the back of the left knee when lying down on his back. He notes trembling of both feet and rated the low back pain as 4/10. Physical examination of the lumbar spine revealed palpable muscle spasms next to the spinous processes when he is lying prone. Flexion and extension are limited due to pain in the lumbosacral region. Straight leg raise was positive on the right. Lasegue was positive on the left. The plan of care included injections and authorization was requested for epidural steroid injection at L3-4 on the left and bilateral L3-4 transforaminal epidural steroid injection.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Bilateral L3-L4 transforaminal epidural steroid injection: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines epidural injections Page(s): 47.

Decision rationale: According to the guidelines, the criteria for the use of Epidural steroid injections: Note: The purpose of ESI 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 offers no significant long-term functional benefit. 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. In this case, the claimant has abnormal MRI, neurological findings and subjective complaints consistent with radiculopathy. The request for ESI for diagnostic purposes is not medically necessary.