

Case Number:	CM15-0103315		
Date Assigned:	06/05/2015	Date of Injury:	04/08/2014
Decision Date:	07/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/04/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/29/2015

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: California, North Carolina
 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 58-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 4/8/14. He reported low back pain after pushing a large plant onto a forklift. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar strain, disc space narrowing, and lumbar degenerative disc disease. Treatment to date has included chiropractic treatment. (MRI) magnetic resonance imaging of lumbar spine performed on 6/20/14 revealed desiccation of L2-3, L3-4, L4-5 and L5-S1 discs, moderate loss of disc height at L5-S1, small bulge at L4-5 with minimal central stenosis, L3-4 minimal central disc bulge with annular tear and minimal disc bulge at L2-3 without central or foraminal stenosis. Currently, the injured worker complains of intermittent low back pain and numbness in the plantar aspect of feet while walking. He is currently laid off. Physical exam noted moderately diminished lumbar range of motion and tenderness on palpation of lumbosacral midline. A request for authorization was submitted for 12 sessions of physical therapy and lumbar epidural steroid injection at L5-S1.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Therapeutic Procedure 1 or More - 2 Times Per Week for 6 Weeks Qty 12: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical medicine Page(s): 98-99.

Decision rationale: CA MTUS supports physical therapy in the chronic phase with recommendations of up to 10 PT visits in a patient who has only had chiropractic care and no PT or home exercise program. Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function ROM and can alleviate discomfort. In this case, the request is for 12 sessions, which exceeds the guidelines of 10. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary or appropriate.

Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection at L5-S1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines ESI.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines ESI Page(s): 46.

Decision rationale: ESI is recommended as an option by the CA MTUS for radicular pain (pain in a dermatomal distribution). ESI can offer short-term pain relief and should be used in conjunction with other rehab efforts, such as home exercise programs. In this case, the patient has not completed the required 4-week course of conservative therapy prior to interventional therapy. There are also no neurologic deficits on examination, with no sensory/motor/reflex abnormalities. There is no imaging to corroborate the necessity of an ESI. Therefore, this request is deemed not medically necessary at this time.