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| Case Number: | CM15-0104107 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 06/08/2015 | Date of Injury: | 12/02/2011 |
| Decision Date: | 07/14/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 05/06/2015 |
| 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

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 52 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 12/2/11. She reported neck and wrist pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having cervical ankylosis positive facet provocation, trapezius and levator scapula muscle spasms, paravertebral muscle spasm, occipital muscle spasm, and radiating paresthesias to the upper extremities. Treatment to date has included physical therapy, chiropractic treatment, epidural steroid injections, Botox scalp injections, and medication. Currently, the injured worker complains of neck pain. The treating physician requested authorization for cervical epidural steroid injections as C3-4 and C4-5.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Unknown Cervical Epidural Steroid Injections at C3-C4 and C4-C5: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid injections, page 46.

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines recommend ESI as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy); however, radiculopathy must be documented on physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or Electro diagnostic testing, not provided here. Submitted reports have not demonstrated any correlating neurological deficits or remarkable diagnostics to support the epidural injections. In addition, to repeat a CESI in the therapeutic phase, repeat blocks should be based on continued objective documented decreasing pain and increasing functional improvement, including at least 50% pain relief with associated reduction of medication use for six to eight weeks. Criteria for repeating the epidurals have not been met or established as the patient continues to treat for chronic pain without functional benefit from previous injections in terms of decreased pharmacological formulation, increased ADLs and decreased medical utilization. There is also no documented failed conservative trial of physical therapy, medications, activity modification, or other treatment modalities to support for the epidural injection. Cervical epidural injections may be an option for delaying surgical intervention; however, there is no surgery planned or identified pathological lesion noted. The Unknown Cervical Epidural Steroid Injections at C3-C4 and C4-C5 is not medically necessary and appropriate.