

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0131606		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	07/20/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/14/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	08/13/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	07/01/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	07/08/2015

### 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: 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 36 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 9/14/2013. He reported acute low back pain during work activity, bending and lifting. Diagnoses include thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis, lumbago, and sleep disturbance. Treatments to date include oral medication, topical medication, physical therapy, chiropractic therapy, acupuncture treatments, and a lumbar epidural steroid injection on 1/14/15 noted to provide short term relief of pain. Currently, he complained of low back pain rated 5/10 VAS. On 6/9/15, the physical examination documented lumbar tenderness, restricted lumbar range of motion, and a positive straight leg raise test on the left side. The plan of care included transforaminal epidural steroid injection at levels L4, L5, and S1 on the right side.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection at Lumbar L4, L5 and S1 (sacroiliac) levels, Left Side of the Low Back as an outpatient: 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:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on epidural steroid injections (ESI) states: 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. The provided clinical documentation for review shows the request is for more than 2 nerve root levels. This is not supported by the California MTUS and therefore the request is not medically necessary.