

Case Number:	CM15-0142135		
Date Assigned:	07/31/2015	Date of Injury:	08/10/1998
Decision Date:	08/28/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/22/2015

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 male, who sustained an industrial injury on 8-10-98. Initial complaints were not reviewed. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar spinal degenerative disc disease; lumbar radiculopathy; thoracic spine degenerative disc disease. Treatment to date has included physical therapy; Epidural Steroid Injection L5-S1 (1-2-15); medications. Currently, the PR-2 notes dated 1-8-15 indicated the injured worker complains of his pain with medications at 7 over 10 and without 8.5 over 10. His quality of sleep is reported as poor and activity level as the same. He has had a lumbar epidural steroid injection was done on 1-2-15 with appropriate soreness post procedure and he felt some benefit. The provider does document the diagnostic findings but there are no current studies. The provider is requesting authorization of Right L5 and S1 (or L5-S1) epidural steroid injections.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Right L5 and S1 (or L5-S1) epidural steroid injections: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

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 Electrodiagnostic testing. Although the patient has radicular symptoms with clinical findings of such, to repeat a LESI 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, not identified here. Submitted reports are unclear with level of pain relief and duration of benefit. Submitted reports have not demonstrated any functional improvement derived from the LESI as the patient has unchanged symptom severity, unchanged clinical findings without decreased in medication profile or treatment utilization or functional improvement described in terms of increased functional status or activities of daily living. Criteria to repeat the LESI have not been met or established. The Right L5 and S1 (or L5-S1) epidural steroid injections are not medically necessary and appropriate.