

Case Number:	CM15-0185856		
Date Assigned:	09/28/2015	Date of Injury:	12/14/2010
Decision Date:	11/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/21/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/21/2015

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, District of Columbia, Maryland
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

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 64 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on December 14, 2010. A recent pain management visit dated August 17, 2015 reported current subjective chief complaint of: "chronic neck pain which radiates into the shoulder with headache." There is no significant change since last visit. There is note of pending facet injections and magnetic resonance imaging of cervical spine. He reports "having difficulty staying asleep." Current medications are "working well." Medication regimen consisted of: Celebrex, Percocet, Baclofen, and Zanaflex. He is also complaining of headaches 5 times a week, which cause "nausea." The current assessment noted: chronic neck pain status post multi-level anterior cervical decompression and fusion August 2012; cervical spondylosis; cervicogenic headache due to above; myofascial pain and spasm; history of chronic severe back pain and injury; multiple level degenerative disc disease and lumbar spondylosis; severe spinal stenosis symptoms; hypertension, environmental allergy; non-insulin diabetes, and poor sleep hygiene due to pain. The following diagnoses were applied to this visit: cervicgia; intervertebral disc disease without myelopathy; degenerative cervical intervertebral disc. The plan of care is noted with recommendation for right cervical 2-5 medial branch block for neck pain and headache. A pain management follow up dated February 02, 2015 reported chief subjective complaint of: "chronic neck pain which radiates into the shoulder with headache." There is noted discussion regarding difficulty obtaining medications. The recommendation for a medial branch block at cervical spine is with standing request. On August 18, 2015 a request was made for a right

medial branch block injection to cervical spine 2-5 which was non-certified by utilization review on August 21, 2015.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Right medial branch block injection at C2-C5: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Neck & Upper Back, Facet joint therapeutic steroid injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck and Upper Back, Facet Joint Diagnostic Blocks.

Decision rationale: Per the ODG Guidelines with regard to facet joint diagnostic blocks: Recommended prior to facet neurotomy (a procedure that is considered under study). Diagnostic blocks are performed with the anticipation that if successful, treatment may proceed to facet neurotomy at the diagnosed levels. Current research indicates that a minimum of one diagnostic block be performed prior to a neurotomy, and that this be a medial branch block (MBB). Although it is suggested that MBBs and intra-articular blocks appear to provide comparable diagnostic information, the results of placebo-controlled trials of neurotomy found better predictive effect with diagnostic MBB. In addition, the same nerves are tested with the MBB as are treated with the neurotomy. The use of a confirmatory block has been strongly suggested due to the high rate of false positives with single blocks (range of 27% to 63%) but this does not appear to be cost effective or to prevent the incidence of false positive response to the neurotomy procedure itself. Criteria for the use of diagnostic blocks for facet nerve pain: Clinical presentation should be consistent with facet joint pain, signs & symptoms. 1. One set of diagnostic medial branch blocks is required with a response of = 70%. The pain response should be approximately 2 hours for Lidocaine. 2. Limited to patients with cervical pain that is non-radicular and at no more than two levels bilaterally. 3. There is documentation of failure of conservative treatment (including home exercise, PT and NSAIDs) prior to the procedure for at least 4-6 weeks. 4. No more than 2 joint levels are injected in one session (see above for medial branch block levels). 5. Recommended volume of no more than 0.5 cc of injectate is given to each joint, with recent literature suggesting a volume of 0.25 cc to improve diagnostic accuracy. 6. No pain medication from home should be taken for at least 4 hours prior to the diagnostic block and for 4 to 6 hours afterward. 7. Opioids should not be given as a sedative during the procedure. 8. The use of IV sedation may be grounds to negate the results of a diagnostic block, and should only be given in cases of extreme anxiety. 9. The patient should document pain relief with an instrument such as a VAS scale, emphasizing the importance of recording the maximum pain relief and maximum duration of pain. The patient should also keep medication use and activity logs to support subjective reports of better pain control. 10. Diagnostic facet blocks should not be performed in patients in whom a surgical procedure is anticipated. 11. Diagnostic facet blocks should not be performed in patients who have had a previous fusion procedure at the planned injection level. 12. It is currently not recommended to perform facet blocks on the same

day of treatment as epidural steroid injections or stellate ganglion blocks or sympathetic blocks or trigger point injections as this may lead to improper diagnosis or unnecessary treatment. Per the citation above, no more than 2 joint levels are to be injected per session. As the request is for four levels, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.