MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0194325		
Date Assigned:	10/08/2015	Date of Injury:	08/03/2005
Decision Date:	11/16/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/02/2015

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, Oregon, Washington
Certification(s)/Specialty: Orthopedic Surgery

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 8-3-05. The injured worker reported back discomfort. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatments for myofascial pain syndrome, lumbar spine strain and lumbosacral radiculopathy. Medical records dated 7-10-15 indicate increased lumbar spine pain. Treatment has included Psychiatric consultation, injection therapy, magnetic resonance imaging, status post fusion, physical therapy, electrodiagnostic studies, Motrin since at least May of 2015, Flexeril since at least May of 2015, Neurontin since at least May of 2015, radiographic studies, acupuncture treatment, and aqua therapy. Objective findings dated 7-10-15 were notable for positive right straight leg raise, right foot with decreased sensation and decreased range of motion in all planes. The original utilization review (9-3-15) denied a request for Right L4, L5 and S1 epidural steroid injection.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Right L4, L5 and S1 epidural steroid injection: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

Decision rationale: According to the CA MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, Epidural injections, page 46, "Recommended as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy)." Specifically the guidelines state that radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. Research has now shown that, on average, less than two injections are required for a successful ESI outcome. Current recommendations suggest a second epidural injection if partial success is produced with the first injection, and a third ESI is rarely recommended. Epidural steroid injection can offer short term pain relief and use should be in conjunction with other rehab efforts, including continuing a home exercise program. The American Academy of Neurology recently concluded that epidural steroid injections may lead to an improvement in radicular lumbosacral pain between 2 and 6 weeks following the injection, but they do not affect impairment of function or the need for surgery and do not provide long-term pain relief beyond 3 months. In addition, there must be demonstration of unresponsiveness to conservative treatment (exercises, physical methods, NSAIDs and muscle relaxants). In this case the exam notes cited do not demonstrate a failure of conservative management nor a clear evidence of a dermatomal distribution of radiculopathy. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.