

Case Number:	CM15-0200362		
Date Assigned:	10/19/2015	Date of Injury:	04/10/2005
Decision Date:	11/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/25/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/12/2015

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 was a 63 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury, April 10, 2005. The injured worker was undergoing treatment for spinal enthesopathy, spondylosis, chronic pain and occipital neuralgia. According to progress note of September 15, 2015, the injured worker's chief complaint was neck pain and right occipital pain and pain in the shoulder blades. The pain radiates into the right occipital. The pain was associated with fatigue, headache, poor sleep, sexual dysfunction, weakness grasping. The pain was aggravated by activity. The pain improved with ice, pain medication, 24 sessions of physical therapy, trigger point injection, pain medication, Percocet, topical cream, steroid injections, trigger point injections and massage therapy. Arthroscopic rotator cuff repair and extensive debridement of the left shoulder. The RFA (request for authorization) dated September 15, 2015; the following treatments were requested outpatient interspinous ligament injection at the thoracic level. The UR (utilization review board) denied certification on September 25, 2015, for an outpatient interspinous ligament injection at the thoracic level.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Outpatient Interspinous Ligament Injection Thoracic Level: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Prolotherapy.

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

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). CA MTUS criteria for epidural steroid injections are: "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)) 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. In this case the exam notes from 9/15/15 do not demonstrate a failure of conservative management nor a clear evidence of a dermatomal distribution of radiculopathy. Therefore the determination is for not medically necessary. CA MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, Trigger point injections, page 122 states, Recommended only for myofascial pain syndrome as indicated below, with limited lasting value. Not recommended for radicular pain. Trigger point injections with an anesthetic such as bupivacaine are recommended for non-resolving trigger points, but the addition of a corticosteroid is not generally recommended. In this case the exam notes from 9/15/15 demonstrate no evidence of myofascial pain syndrome and the claimant has evidence of radiculopathy. Therefore the determination is for not medically necessary.

