

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0203877		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/20/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	08/28/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/03/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	09/30/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/16/2015

### 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 53 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 08-28-2014. A review of the medical records indicates that the worker is undergoing treatment for lumbar sprain, left sciatica and lumbar radiculopathy L S1. MRI of the lumbar spine on 06-23-2015 showed mild multilevel discogenic degenerative changes with some annulus tears, minimal abutment of the exiting L5 nerve root in the left neural foramen at L5-S1 with near abutment of the descending S1 nerve root in the left lateral recess at L5-S1 but no definite nerve root displacement or impingement. Electromyography-nerve conduction studies on 03-16-2015 showed findings consistent with a left S1 radiculopathy. Subjective complaints (06-12-2015 and 08-11-2015) included left leg and hip pain. Objective findings (06-12-2015 and 08-11-2015) revealed left leg limp and the worker was noted to seem to be in moderate pain. Subjective complaints (09-02-2015) included right shoulder, neck and low back pain radiating down the left lower extremity that was described as numbness and tingling. Objective findings (09-02-2015) included limited range of motion of the lumbar spine, an antalgic gait, positive sitting straight leg raise at 75 degrees on the left, tenderness to palpation of the lumbar facet joints and paraspinal musculature and hypoesthesia of the S1 nerve distribution on the left lower extremity. Treatment has included pain medication, application of ice, physical therapy and a home exercise program. The physician noted that a lumbar epidural steroid injection was being requested to reduce pain and inflammation and restore range of motion to facilitate progress in more active treatment programs and avoiding surgery. A utilization review dated 09-30-2015 non-certified a request for lumbar epidural steroid injection left L5 and S1 with IV sedation.

## IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Lumbar epidural steroid injection left L5 and S1 with IV sedation:** 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). 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. 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. In this case the exam notes from 9/2/15 do not demonstrate a failure of conservative management. Therefore the request is not medical necessary.