

Case Number:	CM15-0208340		
Date Assigned:	10/27/2015	Date of Injury:	06/10/2009
Decision Date:	12/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/25/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/22/2015

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, 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 33 year old male with an industrial injury dated 06/10/2009. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for lumbar radiculopathy, lumbar sprain and strain and insomnia. Medical records (03-24-2015, 04-21-2015, 05-26-2015, 07-01-2015 and 08-18-2015) indicate subjective complaints of low back pain, stress and difficulty sleeping. Pain level was 7 out of 10 on a visual analog scale (VAS), unchanged from previous visits. Objective findings (07-01-2015) revealed lumbar spine extension 15 degrees, flexion 50 degrees, left lateral bending 15 degrees, and right lateral bending 15 degrees. Objective findings (08-18-2015) revealed lumbar spine extension 20 degrees, flexion 50 degrees, left lateral bending 20 degrees, and right lateral bending 20 degrees. Treatment has included prescribed medications and periodic follow up visits. The treating physician prescribed services for epidural injection L3, L4 levels. The utilization review dated 09-25-2015, non-certified the request for epidural injection L3, L4 levels.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Epidural injection L3, L4 levels: 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: Per the MTUS CPMTG epidural steroid injections are used 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 benefit. The criteria for the use of epidural steroid injections are as follows: 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) 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. Per Agreed Medical Examination dated 6/24/15, reflexes were noted to be 2+ bilaterally at the patella, 2+ on the right 1+ on the left Achilles. Sensation was intact throughout the lower extremities. Motor strength was 5/5 bilaterally in the lower extremities. Imaging study was not available for review. Above mentioned citation conveys radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. Radiculopathy is defined as two of the following: weakness, sensation deficit, or diminished/absent reflexes associated with the relevant dermatome. These findings are not documented, so medical necessity is not affirmed. As the first criteria is not met, the request is not medically necessary.