

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0021583		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	02/11/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	04/03/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	03/25/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	01/28/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	02/04/2015

### 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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

### 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 59 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 4/3/2013. The current diagnoses are cervical disc disease, cervical radiculopathy, lumbar disc disease, and lumbar radiculopathy. Currently, the injured worker complains of low back pain, which he rates 7/10 on a subjective pain scale. The pain is described as unchanged, shooting and sharp radiating to the bilateral lower extremities with numbness in his right leg. He also complains of neck pain, which he rates 6/10 traveling to the left upper extremity. Treatment to date has included rest, medications, physical therapy, chiropractic, home exercise program, bilateral L5-S1 epidural steroid injection (11/17/2014), and left C4-C5 and C6-C7 transfacet epidural steroid injection (10/7/2014). With regard to his low back pain, he was more than 50% better only for 4-5 weeks. He has decreased his pain medication intake for those weeks. With regard to his neck pain, he reports 60% improvement in pain, with decreased radicular symptoms and less crepitus. The treating physician is requesting second diagnostic left C4-5 and C6-7 transfacet epidural steroid injection and second diagnostic bilateral L5-S1 transforaminal epidural steroid injection, which is now under review. On 1/28/2015, Utilization Review had non-certified a request for second diagnostic left C4-5 and C6-7 transfacet epidural steroid injection and second diagnostic bilateral L5-S1 transforaminal epidural steroid injection. The California MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines were cited.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**1 Second diagnostic left C4-5 and C6-7 transfacet epidural steroid injection: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on epidural steroid injections (ESI) states: 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). 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. There was a 70 % reduction in pain from previous injections however there was not a documented reduction of medication use for 6 -8 weeks. Therefore all criteria have not been met and the request is not certified.

**1 Second diagnostic bilateral L5-S1 transforaminal epidural steroid injection: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines epidural steroid injections.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on epidural steroid injections (ESI) states: 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). 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. There was a 70 % reduction in pain from previous injections however there was not a documented reduction of medication use for 6 -8 weeks. Therefore all criteria have not been met and the request is not certified.