

Case Number:	CM15-0025689		
Date Assigned:	02/18/2015	Date of Injury:	12/19/2003
Decision Date:	03/31/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/05/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/10/2015

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: Georgia

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 51 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 12/19/03. He has reported pain in the neck and back. The diagnoses have included cervical degenerative disc disease and cervical myofascial pain. Treatment to date has included MRI, cervical discectomy and fusion on 1/27/09, lumbar epidural injections 9/16/14 and oral medications. As of the PR2 dated 1/28/15, the injured worker reports pain in the upper and lower back. The treating physician requested a cervical transforaminal epidural injection bilateral at C4, C5 and C6. On 2/5/15 Utilization Review non-certified a request for a cervical transforaminal epidural injection bilateral at C4, C5 and C6. The utilization review physician cited the epidural steroid injections (ESIs) guidelines and MTUS guidelines for chronic pain medical treatment. On 2/10/15, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of a cervical transforaminal epidural injection bilateral at C4,C5 and C6.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 cervical TFE at bilateral C4, C5 & C6: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injections Page(s): 47.

Decision rationale: 1 cervical TFE at bilateral C4, C5 and C6 is not medically necessary. The California MTUS page 47 states "the purpose of epidural steroid injections 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 is no significant long-term functional benefit. Radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment, injections should be performed using fluoroscopy, if the ESI is for diagnostic purposes a maximum of 2 injections should be performed. No more than 2 nerve root levels should be injected using transforaminal blocks. No more than 1 interlaminar level should be injected at one session. 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 6-8 weeks, with the general recommendation of no more than 4 blocks per region per year. Current research does not support a series of 3 injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 epidural steroid injections." The request was made for a total of 6 nerve root levels; therefore, the service is not medically necessary.