

Case Number:	CM15-0027115		
Date Assigned:	02/19/2015	Date of Injury:	09/11/2014
Decision Date:	03/31/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/31/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/12/2015

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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & Gen Prev Med

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 sustained an industrial injury on September 11, 2014. He has reported pain in the lower back and has been diagnosed with herniated nucleus pulposus. Treatment has included medical imaging and medication. Currently the injured worker complains of pain in the lower back extended down the left leg. The treatment plan included an epidural steroid injection and percocet. On January 31, 2015 Utilization Review non certified L4-5 and L5-S1 epidural steroid injection citing the MTUS and ACOEM guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

L4-L5 and L5-S1 ESI's (epidural steroid injections): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-315, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Epidural steroid injections (ESIs), therapeutic

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic pain medical treatment guidelines state that epidural steroid injections are Recommended as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy). 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. There were no medical documents provided to conclude that other rehab efforts or home exercise program is ongoing. Additionally, no objective findings were documented to specify the dermatomal distribution of pain. MTUS further defines the criteria for epidural steroid injections to include: 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. Radiculopathy does appear to be documented by physical exam but lack of medical imaging to corroborate the radiculopathy. However, medical documents do not document how responsive the patient was to a prior epidural steroid injection nor do the documents report any conservative treatments or failures (exercise, physical therapy). As such, the request for L4-L5 and L5-S1 ESI's (epidural steroid injections) is not medically necessary.