

Case Number:	CM15-0028538		
Date Assigned:	02/20/2015	Date of Injury:	02/10/2010
Decision Date:	03/31/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/22/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/13/2015

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 62 year old person, who sustained an industrial injury on 2/10/2010. The diagnoses have included degeneration of cervical intervertebral disc. Treatment to date has included conservative measures. The PR2 report, dated 12/21/2014, was handwritten and greatly illegible. Currently, the injured worker complains of pain in the neck, with radiation to bilateral arms with numbness, tingling, and weakness, and headaches. Current medications were not documented. Prior treatments included medications, physical therapy, and acupuncture. Treatment plan included C5-C7 epidural injection and continued home exercise program. Electrodiagnostic testing, dated 8/20/2010, was abnormal, noting right moderate compression of the median nerve at the carpal tunnel. Cervical spine magnetic resonance imaging, dated 7/01/2010, showed mild compression deformity of the vertebral bodies and disc desiccation, broad based disc protrusion with central canal and foraminal stenosis at C5-C6. Disc desiccation with broad based disc protrusion with biforaminal and central canal stenosis at C6-7, and disc desiccation with bulge, involving C3-4 and C4-5 was noted. On 1/22/2015, Utilization Review non-certified a request for cervical epidural injection, C5-C7, noting the lack of compliance with MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cervical epidural injection C5-7: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: Cervical epidural injection C5-7 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 more than 1 interlaminar level; therefore the service was not medically necessary.