

Case Number:	CM15-0029281		
Date Assigned:	02/23/2015	Date of Injury:	07/16/2014
Decision Date:	04/03/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/20/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/17/2015

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: Arizona, California

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 20 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on July 16, 2014. He has reported lower back pain and has been diagnosed with lumbar radiculopathy. Treatment has included medical imaging, medications, physical therapy, and epidural steroid injection. Currently the injured worker complains of tenderness on palpation of the lower lumbar paraspinal muscles. A progress note on 1/19/15 indicated the claimant had not responded to prior injections and conservative therapy. The treatment plan included surgery and functional capacity evaluation. On January 20, 2015 Utilization Review non certified 1 right lumbar transforaminal epidural steroid injection at the levels of L1 and L2 under fluoroscopic guidance citing the MTUS guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 right lumbar transforaminal epidural steroid injection at the levels of L1 and L2 under fluoroscopic guidance: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines epidural injections Page(s): 47.

Decision rationale: According to the MTUS guidelines, 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. In this case, the claimant has noted prior injections and has failed to improve. Surgical intervention and an FRP is suggested. The benefits for ESI are short term and the request for additional invasive techniques such as ESI is not medically necessary.