

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0214175		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	11/06/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	01/07/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/18/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/05/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/30/2015

### 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: California, Oregon, Washington  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Orthopedic Surgery

### 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 57 year old female sustained an industrial injury on 1-7-2014. The injured worker was being treated for fibromyalgia, lumbar spondylosis, right lower extremity radiculopathy versus right sacroiliac pain, lumbar strain, radiographic L4-5 spondylolisthesis and L5-S1 degenerative disc disease, L4-5 spondylolisthesis, facet hypertrophy with a 3 mm disc bulge causing central canal stenosis and neural foraminal narrowing as per MRI of 2-5-2014, and progressive myofascial pain syndrome. The injured worker (7-6-2015, 8-17-2015, and 9-14-2015) reported back and right hip pain, which was unchanged. The physical exam (7-6-2015) revealed tenderness of the lumbar spine at the L5-S1 (lumbar 5-sacral 1) and right hip. The treating physician noted minimal left hip tenderness. The physical exam (8-17-2015) revealed tenderness of the lumbar spine and hips. The physical exam (9-14-2015) revealed lumbar spine tenderness, right greater than left at the L5-S1 (lumbar 5-sacral 1). The treating physician noted a positive right straight leg raise, forward flexion of 60 degrees with pain, and extension of 10 degrees with pain. Treatment to date includes physical therapy, chiropractic therapy, aquatic therapy, acupuncture, work modifications, off work, steroid injections, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory injection, heat and cold pack, lumbar support, a heat pad, and medications including oral pain, topical pain, muscle relaxant, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory. Per the treating physician (9-14-2015 report), the injured worker was released to modified work, which included no pushing, pulling, or lifting over 10 pounds, and limited stooping and bending. On 9-29-2015, the requested treatments included epidural steroid injection at right L5-S1 under fluoroscopy guidance times 3 for lumbar spine. On 10-5-2015, the original utilization review non- certified a request for epidural steroid injection at L5-S1 under fluoroscopy guidance

times 3 for lumbar spine.

### **IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES**

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

**Epidural steroid injection at L5-S1 under fluoroscopy guidance times 3 for lumbar spine:**  
Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

**Decision rationale:** According to the CA MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, Epidural injections, page 46, "Recommended as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy)." Specifically the guidelines state that radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. Research has now shown that, on average, less than two injections are required for a successful ESI outcome. Current recommendations suggest a second epidural injection if partial success is produced with the first injection, and a third ESI is rarely recommended. 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. The American Academy of Neurology recently concluded that epidural steroid injections may lead to an improvement in radicular lumbosacral pain between 2 and 6 weeks following the injection, but they do not affect impairment of function or the need for surgery and do not provide long-term pain relief beyond 3 months. In addition there must be demonstration of unresponsiveness to conservative treatment (exercises, physical methods, NSAIDs and muscle relaxants). CA MTUS criteria for epidural steroid injections are: "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 exam notes from 9-14-2015 do not demonstrate a failure of conservative management nor a clear evidence of a dermatomal distribution of radiculopathy. Current research does not support "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or the therapeutic phase. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary and the determination is for non-certification.