

Case Number:	CM15-0217453		
Date Assigned:	11/09/2015	Date of Injury:	06/16/2014
Decision Date:	12/21/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/13/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/04/2015

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

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

This is a 57 year old male with a date of injury on 6-16-14. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for lower back pain. Progress report dated 10-5-15 reports continued complaints of lower back pain and bilateral leg pain. He states he has 50 percent relief from the medial branch blocks given on 9-24-15. The pain came down from 8 out of 10 to 4-6 out of 10. He still has low back and tailbone pain left greater than the right with radiating pain down both legs left greater than the right. Physical exam: tenderness to palpation of the left greater than right lumbosacral junction and sacrum, facet stress maneuvers are positive, left greater than right, flexion shows fingertips to shins and he is able to heel toe walk bilaterally. Treatments include: medications, bilateral L5-S1 facet medial branch blocks 9-24-15, lumbar epidural injection 3-13-15 and physical therapy. Request for authorization was made for Diagnostic Bilateral sacroiliac joint injections. Utilization review dated 10-9-15 non-certified the request.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Diagnostic Bilateral sacroiliac joint injections: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Hip and Pelvis, Sacroiliac Joint Injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Hip and Pelvis Chapter/Sacroiliac Joint Blocks Section.

Decision rationale: The MTUS Guidelines do not address the use of sacroiliac joint injections. The ODG recommends sacroiliac joint blocks as an option if the injured worker has failed at least 4-6 weeks of aggressive conservative therapy. The criteria for the use of sacroiliac blocks include: 1) history and physical should suggest the diagnosis with documentation of at least 3 positive exam findings; 2) diagnostic evaluation must first address any other possible pain generators; 3) the patient has had and failed at least 4-6 weeks of aggressive conservative therapy including physical therapy, home exercise and medication management; 4) blocks are performed under fluoroscopy; 5) a positive diagnostic response is recorded as 80% for the duration of the local anesthetic, and if the first block is not positive, a second diagnostic block is not performed; 6) If steroids are injected during the initial injection the duration of pain relief should be at least 6 weeks with at least >70% pain relief recorded for this period; 7) in the treatment phase the suggested frequency for repeat blocks is 2 months or longer provided that at least 70% pain relief is obtained for 6 weeks; 8) the block is not to be performed on the same day as a lumbar epidural steroid injection, transforaminal epidural steroid injection, facet joint injection or medial branch block; 9) in treatment phase the interventional procedures should be repeated only as necessary judging by the medical necessity criteria and should be limited to a maximum of 4 times for local anesthetic and steroid blocks over a period of 1 year. In this case, the injured worker had a medical branch block of 09-24-15 and he states he had 50 percent relief from the block for a short period of time. It is not clear that he has failed with an aggressive physical therapy program. Medical necessity has not been established in this case. The request for diagnostic bilateral sacroiliac joint injections is not medically necessary.