

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0224931		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	11/23/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	08/16/2010
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/31/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/22/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	11/16/2015

### 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 64-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 8-16-2010. The injured worker is undergoing treatment for: cervical radiculopathy. The treatment and diagnostic testing to date has included: left shoulder surgery (date unclear), medications, MRI of the cervical spine (4-15-13). Medications have included: Tramadol, Zetia, Diclofenac, Cyclobenzaprine, Anaprox. On 10-12-15, she reported neck pain with radiation into the bilateral arms with left greater than right, and left shoulder pain. She also reported muscle spasms, and numbness and decreased grip in the left hand more than right. Physical examination revealed left shoulder hike, tension and trigger points in the cervical-thoracic region, tenderness in the occiput, positive spurling's maneuver bilaterally, decreased C6 dermatome on left, positive hoffman's, tinel's and phalen's testing. Current work status: permanent and stationary. The request for authorization is for: cervical epidural steroid injection. The UR dated 10-22-2015: non-certified the request for cervical epidural steroid injection.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Cervical Epidural Steroid Injection:** 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 Neck and Upper Back Complaints 2004, Section(s): Initial Care, and Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

**Decision rationale:** According to the CA MTUS/Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, Epidural Steroid injections page 46; "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. Radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. There must be evidence that the claimant is unresponsive to conservative treatment (exercises, physical methods, NSAIDs, and muscle relaxants)." These guidelines regarding epidural steroid injections continue to state "there is insufficient evidence to make any recommendation for the use of epidural steroid injections to treat radicular cervical pain." CA MTUS, Neck and Back Complaints, Initial Care states, "cervical epidural corticosteroid injections are of uncertain benefit and should be reserved for patients who otherwise would undergo open surgical procedures for nerve root compromise." Facet injections are not recommended per the Summary of Recommendations table." In this case, the exam notes from 10/12/15 do not demonstrate a radiculopathy that is specific to a dermatome on physical exam. In addition, there is lack of evidence of failure of conservative care. Finally, CA MTUS guidelines state, "there is insufficient evidence to make any recommendation for the use of epidural steroid injections to treat radicular cervical pain." Thus, the proposed injection is not medically necessary and the determination is for non-certification.