

Case Number:	CM15-0034746		
Date Assigned:	03/03/2015	Date of Injury:	01/05/2012
Decision Date:	04/16/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/24/2015

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, District of Columbia, Maryland
 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 65 year old female who sustained a work related injury on January 5, 2012, injuring her cervical and lumbar spine after a motor vehicle accident. Treatments included Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of the cervical and lumbar spine, physical therapy, trigger point injections, epidural steroid injections, aqua therapy and pain medications. Electromyogram did not reveal radiculopathy. She was diagnosed with multilevel degenerative disc disease with radiculopathy and stenosis and facet arthropathy. Currently, the injured worker complained of persistent back pain and spasms radiating into the lower extremities. On February 18, 2015, a request for bilateral cervical epidural steroid injections was non-certified by Utilization Review, noting the California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule Guidelines 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:

Bilateral cervical epidural steroid injection at C5-6: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injections Page(s): 46.

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS CPMTG epidural steroid injections are used 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 benefit. The criteria for the use of epidural steroid injections are as follows: 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. Since this is a request for repeat C-ESIs, and the previous ones have been documented to be helpful, than I respectfully disagree with the UR physician assertion that a lack of documentation of radiculopathy obviates medical necessity, as previous ESIs have provided appropriate relief.