

Case Number:	CM15-0038356		
Date Assigned:	03/09/2015	Date of Injury:	12/06/2007
Decision Date:	04/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/19/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/02/2015

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: New Jersey, Michigan, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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:

The injured worker is a 55-year-old male, with a reported date of injury of 12/06/2007. The diagnoses include lumbosacral spondylosis, lumbar spine stenosis, and lumbar disc displacement without myelopathy. Treatments have included an MRI of the lumbar spine, lumbar facet joint injections, and epidural injections, and oral medication. The visit note dated 02/02/2015 indicates that the injured worker complained of left-sided low back and buttock and groin pain. The objective findings showed tenderness over the left side over the lower two facet joints at L4-5 and L5-S1, discomfort with lumbar extension and rotation, muscle tightness on left lumbar side, and tenderness at the left sciatic notch. The treating physician requested left L4-5 facet injection, left L5-S1 facet injection, left L5 transforaminal epidural steroid injection, conscious sedation, and fluoroscopy. The rationale for the request was not indicated.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Left L4-5 and L5-S1 Facet Injection: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints
Page(s): 309.

Decision rationale: According MTUS guidelines, "Invasive techniques (e.g., local injections and facet-joint injections of cortisone and lidocaine) are of questionable merit. Although epidural steroid injections may afford short-term improvement in leg pain and sensory deficits in patients with nerve root compression due to a herniated nucleus pulposus, this treatment offers no significant long term functional benefit, nor does it reduce the need for surgery. Despite the fact that proof is still lacking, many pain physicians believe that diagnostic and/or therapeutic injections may have benefit in patients presenting in the transitional phase between acute and chronic pain." According to ODG guidelines regarding facets injections, "Under study. Current evidence is conflicting as to this procedure and at this time no more than one therapeutic intra-articular block is suggested. If successful (pain relief of at least 50% for a duration of at least 6 weeks), the recommendation is to proceed to a medial branch diagnostic block and subsequent neurotomy (if the medial branch block is positive). If a therapeutic facet joint block is undertaken, it is suggested that it be used in consort with other evidence based conservative care (activity, exercise, etc.) to facilitate functional improvement. (Dreyfuss, 2003) (Colorado, 2001) (Manchikanti , 2003) (Boswell, 2005) See Segmental rigidity (diagnosis). In spite of the overwhelming lack of evidence for the long-term effectiveness of intra-articular steroid facet joint injections, this remains a popular treatment modality. Intra-articular facet joint injections have been popularly utilized as a therapeutic procedure, but are not currently recommended as a treatment modality in most evidence-based reviews as their benefit remains controversial." Furthermore and according to ODG guidelines, Criteria for use of therapeutic intra-articular and medial branch blocks, are as follows: 1. No more than one therapeutic intra-articular block is recommended. 2. There should be no evidence of radicular pain, spinal stenosis, or previous fusion. 3. If successful (initial pain relief of 70%, plus pain relief of at least 50% for a duration of at least 6 weeks), the recommendation is to proceed to a medial branch diagnostic block and subsequent neurotomy (if the medial branch block is positive). 4. No more than 2 joint levels may be blocked at any one time. 5. There should be evidence of a formal plan of additional evidence-based activity and exercise in addition to facet joint injection. The ODG guidelines did not support facet injection for lumbar pain in this clinical context. There is no documentation of facet mediated pain or that facets are the main pain generator. There is no documentation of failure of conservative therapies in this patient. There is no documentation of sustained pain and functional improvement with previous lumbar facet injection. Therefore, the request for Left L4-5 and L5-S1 Facet Injection is not medically necessary.

Left L5 Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints
Page(s): 309.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, epidural steroid injection is optional for radicular pain to avoid surgery. It may offer short term benefit, however there is no significant

long term benefit or reduction for the need of surgery. There is no evidence that the patient has been unresponsive to conservative treatments. In addition, the EMG study performed on August 28, 2006 did not reveal any radiculopathy in the lower extremities. MTUS guidelines does not recommend epidural injections for back pain without radiculopathy. Therefore, Left L5 Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection is not medically necessary.

Conscious Sedation: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

Decision rationale: Since the primary procedure is not medically necessary, none of the associated services are medically necessary.

Fluoroscopy: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

Decision rationale: Since the primary procedure is not medically necessary, none of the associated services are medically necessary.