

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0040700		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	03/10/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	03/26/2012
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/16/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	02/17/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	03/03/2015

### 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: Indiana

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:

The injured worker is a 56 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 03/26/2012. On provider visit dated 01/12/2015 the injured worker has reported moderate back pain. On examination she was noted to have tenderness to palpation throughout the neck and upper trapezius region, cervical spine range of motion causes pain. The diagnoses have included central canal stenosis, cervical myelopathy, cervical herniated disc C5-C6 and C6-C7, status post C3-C7 anterior discectomy and fusion 02/04/2014 and lumbar herniated nucleus pulposus/facet arthropathy L4-L5. Treatment to date has included medication and MRI scan and cervical spine x-rays.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Lumbar spine epidural steroid injection to L4-5:** Upheld

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

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines ESI Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS

Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Epidural steroid injections (ESIs), therapeutic.

**Decision rationale:** MTUS Chronic pain medical treatment guidelines state that epidural steroid injections are "Recommended as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy). 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." There were no medical documents provided to conclude that other rehab efforts or home exercise program is ongoing. Additionally, no objective findings were documented to specify the dermatomal distribution of pain. MTUS further defines the criteria for epidural steroid injections to include: 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. Radiculopathy does appear to be documented with imaging studies. The patient is taking multiple medications, but the progress reports do not document how long the patient has been on these medications and the 'unresponsiveness' to the medications. Additionally, treatment notes do not indicate if other conservative treatments were tried and failed (exercises, physical therapy, etc). As such, the request for Lumbar spine epidural steroid injection to L4-5 is not medically necessary.

**12 sessions of physical therapy for treatment of lumbar spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical medicine guidelines.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical medicine Page(s): 98-99. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Physical Therapy.

**Decision rationale:** California MTUS guidelines refer to physical medicine guidelines for physical therapy and recommends as follows: "Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine." Additionally, ACOEM guidelines advise against passive modalities by a therapist unless exercises are to be carried out at home by patient. ODG quantifies its recommendations with 10

visits over 8 weeks for lumbar sprains/strains and 9 visits over 8 weeks for unspecified backache/lumbago. ODG further states that a 'six-visit clinical trial' of physical therapy with documented objective and subjective improvements should occur initially before additional sessions are to be warranted. Medical records indicate do not indicated if a trial has occurred and, if so, what were the results. As such, the request for 12 sessions of physiotherapy is not medically necessary.