

Case Number:	CM15-0041562		
Date Assigned:	03/11/2015	Date of Injury:	04/18/2012
Decision Date:	04/14/2015	UR Denial Date:	02/19/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/04/2015

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: North Carolina, Georgia
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 57 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on April 18, 2012. She has reported upper, middle and lower back pain. Diagnoses have included lumbar spine degenerative disc disease, lumbar spine spondylosis, and lumbar spine facet arthropathy. Treatment to date has included medications, injections and imaging studies. A progress note dated February 11, 2015 indicates a chief complaint of upper, mid, and lower back pain that returned following the last injection. The treating physician documented a plan of care that included medications and radio frequency ablation.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Radiofrequency Ablation at L4, L5 and S1 on the Right: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Low Back Chapter, Criteria for use of facet joint radiofrequency neurotomy.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 308. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back, Facet Joint Radiofrequency Rhizotomy and Facet Joint Diagnostic Block.

Decision rationale: CA MTUS states that facet injections are a category C intervention with limited evidence for use. ODG section on low back includes the following criteria for facet rhizotomy: (1) Treatment requires a diagnosis of facet joint pain using a medial branch block in which a 70 % reduction pain that lasts for at least two hours is obtained. (2) While repeat neurotomies may be required, they should not occur at an interval of less than 6 months from the first procedure. A neurotomy should not be repeated unless duration of relief from the first procedure is documented for at least 12 weeks at 50% relief. The current literature does not support that the procedure is successful without sustained pain relief (generally of at least 6 months duration). No more than 3 procedures should be performed in a year's period. (3) Approval of repeat neurotomies depends on variables such as evidence of adequate diagnostic blocks, documented improvement in VAS score, decreased medications and documented improvement in function. (4) No more than two joint levels are to be performed at one time. (5) If different regions require neural blockade, these should be performed at intervals of no sooner than one week, and preferably 2 weeks for most blocks. (6) There should be evidence of a formal plan of additional evidence-based conservative care in addition to facet joint therapy. In this case, there is documentation of successful medial branch block and the request is for rhizotomy at two levels. The request for radiofrequency ablation L4-S1 is medically necessary.