

Case Number:	CM15-0059145		
Date Assigned:	04/03/2015	Date of Injury:	02/14/2013
Decision Date:	05/07/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/05/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/30/2015

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 45 year old male who sustained a work related injury on February 14, 2013, incurring injuries to the cervical, thoracic and lumbar spine, bilateral shoulders and bilateral upper extremities. Treatment included physical therapy, electromyogram studies, lumbar epidural injection and medicine management. He was diagnosed with cervical disorder with myelopathy, and lumbar disc herniation, lumbar radiculopathy and stenosis. Currently, the injured worker complained of spasms and cramps in the lower back. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization included six sessions of post epidural therapy and one high volume epidural injection at the cervical (C5-6 and C6-7) level.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Six (6) sessions of post epidural therapy: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs) Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 98.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Physical Medicine is “Recommended as indicated below. Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) can provide short term relief during the early phases of pain treatment and are directed at controlling symptoms such as pain, inflammation and swelling and to improve the rate of healing soft tissue injuries. They can be used sparingly with active therapies to help control swelling, pain and inflammation during the rehabilitation process. Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function, range of motion, and can alleviate discomfort. Active therapy requires an internal effort by the individual to complete a specific exercise or task. This form of therapy may require supervision from a therapist or medical provider such as verbal, visual and/or tactile instruction(s). Patients are instructed and expected to continue active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. Home exercise can include exercise with or without mechanical assistance or resistance and functional activities with assistive devices. (Colorado, 2002) (Airaksinen, 2006) Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. (Li, 2005) The use of active treatment modalities (e.g., exercise, education, activity modification) instead of passive treatments is associated with substantially better clinical outcomes. In a large case series of patients with low back pain treated by physical therapists, those adhering to guidelines for active rather than passive treatments incurred fewer treatment visits, cost less, and had less pain and less disability. The overall success rates were 64.7% among those adhering to the active treatment recommendations versus 36.5% for passive treatment. (Fritz, 2007)” In this case, the patient has had a lumbar epidural steroid injection on February 13, 2015. For post injection treatment, the guidelines suggest 1 to 2 visits of physical therapy per week. There is no documentation as to why the patient cannot perform home exercise program. Therefore, the request for 6 sessions of post epidural therapy is not medically necessary.

One (1) high volume epidural injection at the left C5-6 and C6-C7 level: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs) Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 181.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, 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. 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. The patient file does not document that the patient is candidate for surgery. In addition, there is no documentation to support any recent initiation and failure with conservative treatments. Furthermore, the EMG/NCV study performed on June 17, 2014 did not document any evidence of cervical radiculopathy or brachial plexopathy in the right upper and none at the left upper extremities. MTUS guidelines do not

recommend epidural injections for neck pain without radiculopathy. Therefore, the request for 1 high volume epidural injection at the left C5-6 and C6-C7 level is not medically necessary.