

Case Number:	CM15-0081903		
Date Assigned:	05/04/2015	Date of Injury:	11/05/2014
Decision Date:	06/02/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/28/2015

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: Arizona, California
 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 52-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on November 5, 2014. She has reported pain in the interscapular region of both arms and has been diagnosed with persistent symptomatic cervical radiculitis. Treatment has included medications, physical therapy, and modified work duty. Currently the injured worker had moderate radiation of pain to the interscapular region of both arms. The treatment request included transforaminal epidural injections at C3-4, C4-5.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Transforaminal Epidural Injections C3-C4 C4-C5: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): 174-175, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines epidural injections Page(s): 47.

Decision rationale: According to the guidelines, the criteria for the use of Epidural steroid injections: Note: The purpose of ESI is 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 functional benefit. 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 researches do not support "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or the therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections. According to the ACOEM guidelines, epidural steroid injections are not recommended. Invasive techniques are of questionable merit. The treatments do not provide any long-term functional benefit or reduce the need for surgery. In this case, the claimant did not have radicular findings of exam of the cervical spine. Dignostics were not done to validate radiculopathy. The request for cervical epidural steroid injections is not medically necessary.