

Case Number:	CM15-0086068		
Date Assigned:	05/08/2015	Date of Injury:	01/19/2014
Decision Date:	06/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/23/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/05/2015

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: California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 54-year-old male, with a reported date of injury of 01/19/2014. The diagnoses include low back pain, lumbar disc displacement herniated nucleus pulposus, lower extremity radiculitis, spinal stenosis, sciatica, and lumbar spine sprain/strain. Treatments to date have included lumbar epidural steroid injection on 03/11/2015, physical therapy for the lumbar spine, oral medications, an MRI of the lumbar spine on 01/16/2015, which showed disc desiccation, degenerative changes, and herniation. The progress report dated 04/14/2015 is handwritten and somewhat illegible. The report indicates that the subjective complaint was low back pain. The objective findings include tenderness of the lumbar spine paraspinal muscles. No other objective findings were documented. There was no documentation of the injured worker's response to the previous lumbar epidural steroid injection. The treating physician requested a second lumbar epidural steroid injection at L4-5.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injections at L4-5, second injection: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injections (ESIs) Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Steroid injections, page 46.

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines recommend ESI as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy); however, radiculopathy must be documented on physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or Electrodiagnostic testing. Although the patient has radicular symptoms with clinical findings of such, to repeat a LESI 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. Submitted reports are unclear with level of pain relief and duration of benefit. Submitted reports have not demonstrated any functional improvement derived from the LESI as the patient has unchanged symptom severity, unchanged clinical findings without decreased in medication profile or treatment utilization or functional improvement described in terms of increased functional status or activities of daily living. Criteria to repeat the LESI have not been met or established. The Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injections at L4-5, second injection is not medically necessary and appropriate.