

Case Number:	CM15-0089742		
Date Assigned:	05/14/2015	Date of Injury:	09/05/2013
Decision Date:	06/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/11/2015

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 42 year old male with an industrial injury dated 09/05/2013. His diagnoses included occipital neuralgia and cervical myofascial pain syndrome. Medical diagnosis was liver cysts. Prior treatment included Tylenol, Norco and physical therapy. He presents on 03/16/2015 with complaints of neck pain radiating to the shoulders and head. Physical exam noted tenderness at occipital nerve sites and cervical paraspinal. Facet loading was negative bilaterally. Motor strength was normal in bilateral upper extremities. The provider documented the injured worker was unable to take anti-inflammatories because of recent diagnosis of ulcers. He had completed 11 sessions of physical therapy with temporary benefit. Sitting in recliner with heating pads, bio freeze and tiger balm helped. His current medications included bio freeze, Dexilant, fish oil, lorazepam, and tiger balm, Zyrtec, Norco and Citalopram. He reports 60-70% relief with current medications. Treatment plan included occipital nerve block times one on each side and medications (Neurontin).

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Occipital nerve block times 1 on each side: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints Page(s): Chapter 8, Neck and Upper Back Complaints, Injections/Facet Blocks, page 175, 181. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG, Head Chapter, Greater Occipital Nerve Block, page 203.

Decision rationale: Guidelines state Greater Occipital Nerve Block is considered under study for use in treatment of primary headaches as studies show conflicting results, and when positive, have found response limited to a short-term duration. Additionally, occipital blocks is not recommended for cervicogenic headaches as recent randomized controlled trial although noted some improvement at 3 months; however, found no difference in outcome at 24 months from the sham control group. In this case, submitted reports have not demonstrated objective clinical findings of pain relief in terms of reduction in opioid prescription dosage and medical utilization or an increase in ADLs and function for greater than 50% sustained for at least 6 months duration from the previous treatment rendered. Criteria for diagnostic blocks also include documented failed conservative treatment trial without evidence of radicular findings not met here with continued radiating pain to the shoulders and head. Guidelines note nerve blocks has conflicting evidence of efficacy and is considered under study without clear benefit or functional improvement. The Occipital nerve block times 1 on each side is not medically necessary and appropriate.