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| Case Number: | CM15-0089781 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 05/14/2015 | Date of Injury: | 04/25/2014 |
| Decision Date: | 06/16/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 04/16/2015 |
| 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: 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 35 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on April 25, 2014. The injured worker was diagnosed as having cephalgia, cervical sprain/strain, rule out herniated cervical disc and head trauma. Treatment and diagnostic studies to date have included medication requests for electromyogram, nerve conduction study and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). A progress note dated December 23, 2014 provides the injured worker complains of continued neck pain radiating over shoulder and left wrist and hand. He also reports left knee pain. He reports medication helps. Physical exam notes cervical tightness and spasm with positive Spurling's and Foramina Compression test. There is a request for cervical epidural steroid injection.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cervical epidural steroid injection at the C4-5 and C5-C6 levels under epidurography and fluoroscopic guidance: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines criteria for the use of epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS 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 therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections. In this case, the claimant did have some radicular findings on prior exams, but the results of imaging or electrodiagnostics were not provided to corroborate. As a result, the request for the cervical ESI is not medically necessary.