

Case Number:	CM14-0115617		
Date Assigned:	08/04/2014	Date of Injury:	01/21/2014
Decision Date:	10/08/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/11/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/23/2014

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Anesthesiology, has a subspecialty in Pain Management and is licensed to practice in Georgia. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

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 claimant is a 57 year old female presenting with chronic pain following a work related injury on 01/21/2014. The claimant neck pain and left shoulder pain. The claimant was diagnosed with acute to chronic cervicgia, predominant left upper extremity radiculopathic pain, left shoulder region arthralgia and myofascial strain. MRI of the cervical spine showed multi-level broad-based disc bulges from C3-4 to C6-7 with resultant canal stenosis and neural foraminal stenosis from a 3 mm disc bulge. The physical exam showed reduced range of motion of the cervical spine and diminished sensation in the C8 dermatome distribution on the left side. The claimant has tried conservative therapy including medications and activity adjustments such as physical therapy and a TENS unit that provided some relief. A claim was made for a cervical epidural steroid injection with moderate sedation.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cervical Spine Interlaminar Epidural Steroid Injection to the Left C7-T1 with Fluoroscopic Guidance with moderate sedation: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injections Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines-Sedation

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injection, Page(s): 47. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck and Shoulder Complaints, Treatment Considerations

Decision rationale: The California MTUS page 47 states "the purpose of epidural steroid injections 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 is no significant long-term functional benefit. Radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment, injections should be performed using fluoroscopy, if the ESI is for diagnostic purposes a maximum of 2 injections should be performed. No more than 2 nerve root levels should be injected using transforaminal blocks. No more than 1 interlaminar level should be injected at one session. 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 6-8 weeks, with the general recommendation of no more than 4 blocks per region per year. Current research does not support a series of 3 injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 epidural steroid injections." The ODG states that in terms of sedation with epidural steroid injections, the use of IV sedation (including other agents such as modafinil) may interfere with the result of the diagnostic block, and should only be given in cases of extreme anxiety. Additionally, a major concern is that sedation may result in the inability of the patient to experience the expected pain and parathesias associated with spinal cord irritation. The claimant physical exam does display cervical radiculopathy that is corroborated by diagnostic studies demonstrating the specific nerve root compression in the distribution of the claimant's pain; however moderate sedation is not recommended. Based on ODG guidelines the request for Cervical Spine Interlaminar Epidural Steroid Injection to the Left C7-T1 with Fluoroscopic Guidance with moderate sedation is not medically necessary.