

Case Number:	CM14-0134652		
Date Assigned:	08/27/2014	Date of Injury:	05/09/2012
Decision Date:	10/23/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/25/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/21/2014

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 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and is licensed to practice in California. 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 injured worker is a 62-year-old male who reported an injury on 05/09/2012. The mechanism of injury was cumulative trauma. Prior therapies included chiropractic therapy and acupuncture, as well as medications. The medications included Flexeril 7.5 mg. The documentation of 05/07/2014 revealed the injured worker was waiting for authorization for transforaminal epidural steroid injection. The injured worker had current complaints of neck pain and rated 6/10 to 7/10. The radiation was into the bilateral upper extremities going to his shoulders with radiation of pain in the bilateral lower extremities going to the feet. The physical examination of the lumbar spine revealed decreased sensation in the left L4, L5, and S1 dermatomes. The injured worker had 4+/5 strength in the bilateral poses, quadriceps, and hamstrings. The injured worker had 4+/5 strength in the left tibialis anterior, extensor hallucis longus, inversion, eversion, and plantar flexor muscle groups. Straight leg raise was positive bilaterally. The diagnoses included cervical and lumbar radiculopathy. The treatment plan included a transforaminal epidural steroid injection at bilateral L4 and L5 nerve roots for diagnostic reasons, continuation of the home exercise program, and Flexeril 7.5 mg, plus Terocin patches. There was no request for authorization submitted for review.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Bilateral L4 & L5 transforaminal epidural steroid injection qty: 2: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injection, Page(s): 46.

Decision rationale: The California MTUS Guidelines recommend epidural steroid injections when there is documentation of objective findings of radiculopathy that are corroborated by electrodiagnostics or imaging studies. There should be documentation of failure of conservative care including physical therapy, NSAIDs, and muscle relaxants. The clinical documentation submitted for review failed to provide official MRI or electrodiagnostic studies. The injured worker had objective findings upon physical examination. There was a lack of documentation of a failure of conservative care. Additionally, the request as submitted was for a quantity of 2 injections. There was a lack of documented clarity to indicate whether the request for 2 injections was for the 2 levels or whether the request was for a set of 2 injections as two sets of injections could not be approved without documentation of the injured worker's response to the first injection. Given the above and the lack of clarity, the request for bilateral L4 and L5 transforaminal epidural steroid injection QTY: 2 is not medically necessary.