

Case Number:	CM14-0155513		
Date Assigned:	09/25/2014	Date of Injury:	08/06/2009
Decision Date:	10/27/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/13/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/23/2014

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 Tennessee. 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:

This is a 59 year old male with an 8/6/2009 date of injury. The exact mechanism of the original injury was not clearly described. A progress reported dated 8/25/14 noted subjective complaints of back, knee, hip and shoulder pain. Objective findings included decreased ROM lumbar spine. It is noted he had facet injection to L4-L5, L5-S1 in February 2012 without much benefit. Diagnostic impression: low back pain. Treatment to date: medication management. A UR decision dated 9/13/14 denied the request for diagnostic lumbar medial branch blocks at L5-S1 bilaterally. From the records he had facet injections during 2012 without significant benefit. Any further facet injections/medial branch blocks would not be medically necessary.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Diagnostic lumbar medial branch blocks at L5-S1 bilaterally: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG Low Back, Facet Joint Diagnostic Blocks

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) low back chapter - medial branch blocks

Decision rationale: CA MTUS does not specifically address medial branch blocks. ODG states that medial branch blocks are not recommended except as a diagnostic tool for patients with non-radicular low back pain limited to no more than two levels bilaterally; conservative treatment prior to the procedure for at least 4-6 weeks; and no more than 2 joint levels are injected in one session. However, in the records available for review, it is noted that the patient had prior facet injections in 2012 to L4-L5 and L5-S1 with no benefit. It is unclear why medial branch blocks would be pursued after ineffective intra-articular facet injections. Additionally, there is no clear documentation of failure of conservative management. Therefore, the request for diagnostic lumbar medial branch blocks at L5-S1 bilaterally is not medically necessary.