

Case Number:	CM14-0161880		
Date Assigned:	10/07/2014	Date of Injury:	08/13/2012
Decision Date:	10/30/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/25/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/01/2014

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 45 year old male presenting with chronic pain following a work related injury on 8/13/2012. The claimant was diagnosed with cervical discopathy, L5, S1 radiculopathy, carpal tunnel syndrome, posterior interosseous syndrome, chronic neck pain and lower back pain. MRI of the lumbar spine showed disc protrusion at L4-5 which indents the anterior portion of the lumbosacral sac, mild hypertrophy of the facets, disc extrusion at L5-S1, mildly compromising the exiting neural foramen on the left and mild hypertrophy of the facets. The physical exam showed slight right leg limp, decreased cervical spine range of motion, moderate tenderness over the lumbar spine, limited lumbar mobility and positive right straight leg raise, decreased sensation in the right L5, S1 distribution, decreased right ankle jerk. The provider recommended a lumbar epidural steroid injection and lumbar facet block at L4-S1.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Steroid lumbar epidural steroid injection L4-S1, selective nerve root block, facet block, lumbar spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injections (ESIS) Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid Injections Page(s): 47.

Decision rationale: Steroid Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection @ L4-S1, Selective Nerve Root Block, Facet Block, Lumbar Spine is not medically necessary. 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 physical exam and MRI results does not corroborate lumbar radiculitis for which the procedure was requested. The claimant did exhibit any neurological deficit; in the dermatomal distribution to be treated with an epidural steroid injection. Additionally, a lumbar epidural steroid injection and facet injection should not be performed at the same time. The requested service is not medically necessary.