

Case Number:	CM14-0176195		
Date Assigned:	10/29/2014	Date of Injury:	01/30/2014
Decision Date:	12/05/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/02/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/23/2014

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 General Preventive Medicine and is licensed to practice in Indiana. 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 employee is a 30 year old male with date of injury of 1/30/2014. A review of the medical records indicate that the patient is undergoing treatment for discogenic syndrome of the lumbar spine. Subjective complaints include continued lower back pain with radiation to the right leg and foot. Objective findings include limited range of motion of the lumbar spine with tenderness to palpation of the paraspinals; positive straight leg raise on the right; MRI showing disc protrusion of the L3-L4 level. Treatment has included physical therapy, trigger point injections, and Celebrex. The utilization review dated 10/22/2014 non-certified epidural steroid injections of the spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Epidural Steroid Injection 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 ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-315, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs) Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Epidural steroid injections (ESIs), therapeutic

Decision rationale: California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS) Chronic pain medical treatment guidelines state that epidural steroid injections are "Recommended as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy) . . . Epidural steroid injection can offer short term pain relief and use should be in conjunction with other rehab efforts, including continuing a home exercise program." There were no medical documents provided to conclude that other rehab efforts or home exercise program is ongoing. Additionally, no objective findings were documented to specify the dermatomal distribution of pain. California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS) further defines the criteria for epidural steroid injections to include: 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 research does not support a "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections. The patient is taking Celebrex, but the progress reports do not document how long the patient has been on this medication and the "unresponsiveness" to the medication. Additionally, treatment notes do not indicate if other conservative treatments were tried and failed (exercises, physical therapy, etc). Additionally, there is no information on the levels of injections. As such, the request for epidural steroid injection of the lumbar spine is not medically necessary.