

Case Number:	CM14-0184221		
Date Assigned:	11/10/2014	Date of Injury:	05/06/2014
Decision Date:	12/16/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/24/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/04/2014

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 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:

This employee is a 71 year old male with date of injury of 5/6/2014. A review of the medical records indicate that the patient is undergoing treatment for cervicalgia. Subjective complaints include continued 6/10 pain in the neck region traveling down the left arm. Objective findings include limited range of motion of the cervical spine with tenderness to palpation of the paravertebrals. Treatment has included Medrol pack. The utilization review dated 10/24/2014 non-certified left cervical epidural steroid injection (ESI) at the C5-C6 level.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Outpatient left cervical epidural steroid injection (ESI) at the C5-C6 level: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs) Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain, Epidural steroid injections (ESIs)

Decision rationale: 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. 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 the "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections. The patient does demonstrate radiating pain but no paresthesias in the upper extremities and there is no documentation of dermal pain in the upper extremities. The medical documents provided did not document a positive Spurling test and upper extremity motor, sensory and reflex physical examinations were all normal. Concerning medical imaging, there is no evidence of cervical nerve root compression on MRI. The medical documents provided do not provide evidence of cervical radiculopathy. As such, the request for left cervical epidural steroid injection (ESI) at the C5-C6 level is not medically necessary.