

Case Number:	CM15-0008369		
Date Assigned:	01/23/2015	Date of Injury:	09/26/2006
Decision Date:	03/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/14/2015

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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:

State(s) of Licensure: Maryland, Texas, Virginia

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Allergy and Immunology, Rheumatology

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 58 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on September 26, 2006. She has reported middle back pain and neck pain. The diagnoses have included multilevel degenerative disc disease, cervical and thoracic spine disc bulges, cervical spine stenosis, and chronic pain syndrome. Treatment to date has included physical therapy, medications, and imaging studies. On 11/10/06 MRI of thoracic spine with moderate spondylosis at C4-5, C5-6, C6-7, minimal spondylosis at T2-3, T3-4, T4-5 and T5-6, minimal posterior disc bulge at C7-T1, T1-2, mild right C5-6 neural foraminal stenosis. Currently, the injured worker complains of continued back and neck pain. The treating physician is requesting bilateral thoracic spine injections at two levels under intravenous sedation. On January 2, 2015 Utilization Review non-certified the requested injections noting the lack of documentation to support the medical necessity of the service. The MTUS, ACOEM Guidelines, and ODG were cited in the decision.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Bilateral T4-5, T5-6 facet joint injections under IV sedation: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines

(ODG) - Treatment in Workers' Compensation (TWC), Low Back Procedure Summary last updated 11/21/2014

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-315, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injection Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Neck and Upper Back (Acute & Chronic), Facet joint diagnostic blocks (injections) MD Guidelines, Facet Joint Injections/Therapeutic Facet Joint Injections

Decision rationale: ACOEM Guidelines state "Invasive techniques (e.g., local injections and facet-joint injections of cortisone and lidocaine) are of questionable merit. Although epidural steroid injections may afford short-term improvement in leg pain and sensory deficits in patients with nerve root compression due to a herniated nucleus pulposus, this treatment offers no significant long term functional benefit, nor does it reduce the need for surgery. Despite the fact that proof is still lacking, many pain physicians believe that diagnostic and/or therapeutic injections may have benefit in patients presenting in the transitional phase between acute and chronic pain." MTUS is silent specifically with regards to facet injections, but does refer to epidural steroid injections. ODG and MD Guidelines agree that: "One diagnostic facet joint injection may be recommended for patients with chronic low back pain that is significantly exacerbated by extension and rotation or associated with lumbar rigidity and not alleviated with other conservative treatments (e.g., NSAIDs, aerobic exercise, other exercise, manipulation) in order to determine whether specific interventions targeting the facet joint are recommended . . . If after the initial block/blocks are given (see "Diagnostic Phase" above) and found to produce pain relief of at least 50-70% pain relief for at least 6-8 weeks, additional blocks may be supported." ODG details additional guidelines: Clinical presentation should be consistent with facet joint pain, signs & symptoms. 1. One set of diagnostic medial branch blocks is required with a response of 70%. The pain response should last at least 2 hours for Lidocaine. 2. Limited to patients with low-back pain that is non-radicular and at no more than two levels bilaterally. 3. There is documentation of failure of conservative treatment (including home exercise, PT and NSAIDs) prior to the procedure for at least 4-6 weeks. 4. No more than 2 facet joint levels are injected in one session (see above for medial branch block levels). 5. Recommended volume of no more than 0.5 cc of injectate is given to each joint. 6. No pain medication from home should be taken for at least 4 hours prior to the diagnostic block and for 4 to 6 hours afterward. 7. Opioids should not be given as a "sedative" during the procedure. 8. The use of IV sedation (including other agents such as midazolam) may be grounds to negate the results of a diagnostic block, and should only be given in cases of extreme anxiety. 9. The patient should document pain relief with an instrument such as a VAS scale, emphasizing the importance of recording the maximum pain relief and maximum duration of pain. The patient should also keep medication use and activity logs to support subjective reports of better pain control. 10. Diagnostic facet blocks should not be performed in patients in whom a surgical procedure is anticipated. (Resnick, 2005) 11. Diagnostic facet blocks should not be performed in patients who have had a previous fusion procedure at the planned injection level. [Exclusion Criteria that would require UR physician review: Previous fusion at the targeted level. The guidelines recommend facet joint injections for the lower spine, not for the thoracic spine. There is discrepancies between the imaging, the exam and the levels to be injected. As such, the request for Bilateral T4-5, T5-6 facet joint injection under IV sedation is not medically necessary.

