

Case Number:	CM15-0106179		
Date Assigned:	06/10/2015	Date of Injury:	12/02/2010
Decision Date:	07/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/22/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/02/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 37 year old man sustained an industrial injury on 12/2/2010. The mechanism of injury is not detailed. Evaluations include lumbar spine MRI dated 1/6/2011 and lumbar spine x-rays dated 2/23/2012. Diagnoses include lumbar disc syndrome, lumbar radiculopathy, and coccydynia. Treatment has included oral medications and lumbar epidural steroid injections. Physician notes on a PR-2 dated 5/7/2015 show complaints of increased back pain with radiation down the left lower extremity. The worker rates his pain as 7/10 without medications and 1-2/10 with medications. Recommendations include Norco, Colace, repeat caudal epidural steroid injection to the lumbosacral spine, and urine drug screen.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 repeat caudal epidural steroid injection for bilateral S1 radicular component and left L5-S1 transforaminal approach: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid injections, page 46.

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines recommend ESI as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy); however, radiculopathy must be documented on physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or Electrodiagnostic testing, not provided here. Submitted reports have not demonstrated any correlating neurological deficits or remarkable diagnostics to support the epidural injections. In addition, to repeat a LESI in the therapeutic phase, repeat blocks should be based on continued objective documented decreasing pain and increasing functional improvement, including at least 50% pain relief with associated reduction of medication use for six to eight weeks. Criteria for repeating the epidurals have not been met or established as the patient continues to treat for chronic pain without functional benefit from previous injections in terms of decreased pharmacological formulation, increased ADLs and decreased medical utilization. There is also no documented failed conservative trial of physical therapy, medications, activity modification, or other treatment modalities to support for the epidural injection. Lumbar epidural injections may be an option for delaying surgical intervention; however, there is no surgery planned or identified pathological lesion noted. The 1 repeat caudal epidural steroid injection for bilateral S1 radicular component and left L5-S1 transforaminal approach is not medically necessary and appropriate.