

Case Number:	CM15-0016283		
Date Assigned:	02/04/2015	Date of Injury:	03/10/2014
Decision Date:	03/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/28/2015

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

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, 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:

This 54 year old male sustained an industrial injury on 3/10/14, to the head, face, nose, ribs, right knee, back and internal organs. Magnetic resonance imaging cervical spine (5/2014) showed disc herniation at C5-C6. Current diagnoses included cervical radiculopathy, lumbosacral radiculopathy, shoulder impingement and wrist tendinitis/bursitis. In a request for authorization dated 12/18/14, the orthopedic physician stated that based upon the magnetic resonance imaging results from May, the candidate was a candidate for cervical epidural injections. Physical exam was remarkable for spasm, tenderness and guarding to the paravertebral musculature of the cervical spine and lumbar spine with decreased range of motion on flexion and extension with weakness upon elevating the right arm. On 1/15/15, Utilization Review noncertified a request for cervical epidural injection noting that the request does not specify a level or side and citing CA MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines. As a result of the UR denial, an IMR was filed with the [REDACTED].

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Cervical epidural injection: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

Decision rationale: This 54 year old male has complained of neck and low back pain since date of injury 3/10/14. He has been treated with physical therapy and medications. The current request is for cervical epidural steroid injection. Per the MTUS guideline cited above, the following criteria must be met for an epidural steroid injection to be considered medically necessary: 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" injection in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. The available medical records do not include documentation that meet criteria (1) above. Specifically, radiculopathy was not documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. On the basis of the above MTUS guidelines and available provider documentation, cervical epidural steroid injection is not indicated as medically necessary.