

Case Number:	CM15-0114662		
Date Assigned:	06/22/2015	Date of Injury:	03/08/2013
Decision Date:	07/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/20/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/15/2015

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: North Carolina
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 39 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 03/08/2013. He has reported injury to the right arm, left lower extremity, and low back. The diagnoses have included low back pain; lumbar disc disorder; lumbar radiculopathy; lumbar facet syndrome; lumbar spondylosis; and lumbar degenerative disc disease. Treatment to date has included medications, diagnostics, epidural steroid injection, TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) unit, chiropractic therapy, physical therapy, and home exercise program. Medications have included Tramadol and Ibuprofen. A progress note from the treating physician, dated 04/23/2015, documented a follow-up visit with the injured worker. The injured worker reported lower back pain with numbness and tingling radiation in to the bilateral lower extremities, and left foot pain; the pain is associated with muscle spasms and weakness; the pain is relieved by applications of heat or cold, massaging, and medications; physical therapy was not effective; quality of sleep is poor; and he cannot twist without pain. Objective findings included lumbar spine range of motion is limited due to pain; spasm and tenderness is noted on both the sides; L4, L5 tenderness to palpation; lumbar facet loading is positive on both the sides; straight leg raising test is positive on both the side; and pinprick test is slightly decreased at L5 and S1 bilaterally. The treatment plan has included the request for lumbar transforaminal epidural steroid injection at L4-5 and L5-S1.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lumbar Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection at L4-5 and L5-S1: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on epidural steroid injections (ESI) states: Criteria for the use of Epidural steroid injections: Note: The purpose of ESI is to reduce pain and inflammation, restoring range of motion and thereby facilitating progress in more active treatment programs, and avoiding surgery, but this treatment alone offers no significant long-term functional benefit. 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 provided clinical documentation for review does not show dermatomal radiculopathy on exam that is corroborated by imaging or EMG studies that are included for review in the provided clinical documentation. Therefore the request does not meet all criteria as outlined above and is not medically necessary.