MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0116673		
Date Assigned:	06/25/2015	Date of Injury:	03/26/2014
Decision Date:	07/23/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/17/2015

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: Arizona, California
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 50 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 03/26/14. Initial complaints and diagnoses are not available. Treatments to date include medications, belt, pain injections, exercise, heat, ice, acupuncture, chiropractic care, and Extracorporeal Shockwave procedures. Diagnostic studies include x-rays of the bilateral elbows and lumbar spine on 07/15/14, MRIs of the bilateral elbows and lumbar spine on 05/10/14, as well as an electrodiagnostic study on 12/19/14. Current complaints include lower back and bilateral elbow pain. Current diagnoses include thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis, lumbar disc displacement, lumbago, and sprains/strains of the elbow and forearm. In a progress note dated 06/04/15 the treating provider reports the plan of care as a bilateral L4-5 epidural steroid injection, 6 sessions of hand therapy, and medications including Voltaren and Norflex. The requested treatments include a bilateral L4-5 epidural steroid injection.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Bilateral L4-5 epidural steroid injection under fluoroscopic guidance: Overturned

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 injections Page(s): 47.

Decision rationale: According to the guidelines, the 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. In this case, the claimant has chronic lumbar radiculopathy as demonstrated on exam and EMG. The claimant had undergone conservative therapy including medications, acupuncture and physical modalities. The request for an L4-L5 ESI is appropriate and medically necessary.