

Case Number:	CM15-0122795		
Date Assigned:	07/07/2015	Date of Injury:	05/22/2012
Decision Date:	08/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/10/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/25/2015

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, District of Columbia, Maryland
Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

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 56-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 5/22/2012 resulting in radiating neck pain. She is diagnosed with myofascial pain syndrome, cervical spinal stenosis, and cervical degenerative disc disease. Documented treatment has included medication, physical therapy, myofascial therapy, trigger point injections, and cervical epidural steroid injections, all with reported temporary pain relief. Right cervical medial branch blocks at C3-4, resulted reported exacerbation of pain. The injured worker continues to report neck and upper back pain radiating to the right shoulder, with intermittent right arm numbness. The treating physician's plan of care includes Right C3-4 and C4-5, bilateral C7-T1 facet joint injections under fluoroscopic guidance. She is presently working.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Right C3-4 and C4-5, bilateral C7-T1 facet joint injections under fluoroscopic guidance for clear facet mediated pain: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Neck and Upper Back: Facet Joint Blocks.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back, Facet joint intra-articular injections.

Decision rationale: The MTUS is silent on lumbar facet injections. With regard to facet injections, ODG states: "Under study. Current evidence is conflicting as to this procedure and at this time no more than one therapeutic intra-articular block is suggested. If successful (pain relief of at least 50% for a duration of at least 6 weeks), the recommendation is to proceed to a medial branch diagnostic block and subsequent neurotomy (if the medial branch block is positive). If a therapeutic facet joint block is undertaken, it is suggested that it be used in consort with other evidence based conservative care (activity, exercise, etc.) to facilitate functional improvement." "Criteria for use of therapeutic intra-articular and medial branch blocks, are as follows: 1. No more than one therapeutic intra-articular block is recommended. 2. There should be no evidence of radicular pain, spinal stenosis, or previous fusion. 3. If successful (initial pain relief of 70%, plus pain relief of at least 50% for a duration of at least 6 weeks), the recommendation is to proceed to a medial branch diagnostic block and subsequent neurotomy (if the medial branch block is positive). 4. No more than 2 joint levels may be blocked at any one time. 5. There should be evidence of a formal plan of additional evidence-based activity and exercise in addition to facet joint injection therapy." Per the citation above, no more than two nerve root levels should be blocked at one time. As the request is for four levels, medical necessity cannot be affirmed.