

Case Number:	CM15-0128406		
Date Assigned:	07/15/2015	Date of Injury:	11/29/2010
Decision Date:	08/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/03/2015

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 57 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on November 29, 2010. The injured worker reported being a pedestrian being struck by a car. The injured worker was diagnosed as having cervical strain/sprain with radiculopathy, lumbosacral myospasms with myofascial trigger point and lumbar sprain/strain and radiculopathy. Treatment to date has included oral and topical medication, cane and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). A progress note dated June 5, 2015 provides the injured worker complains of neck pain radiating down the arms and to the hands. She has back pain radiating down the legs. She rates her pain 9/10. She reports sleep disturbance and depression due to pain. Physical exam notes an antalgic gait with lumbar spasm and triggering and painful decreased range of motion (ROM). Review of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) shows disc degeneration and protrusion. The plan includes lumbar epidural steroid injection, use of cane, follow-up with psychologist and oral and topical medication.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

L5-S1 Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: Per the MTUS CPMTG epidural steroid injections are used 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 benefit. The criteria for the use of epidural steroid injections are as follows: 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 documentation submitted for review indicates that the injured worker previously underwent an epidural steroid injection at L5-S1 on 11/26/14. There was no documentation of benefit or associated reduction of medication use for any duration of time. Absent this, the medical necessity of repeat injection cannot be affirmed. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.