

Case Number:	CM15-0128792		
Date Assigned:	07/15/2015	Date of Injury:	09/30/1998
Decision Date:	08/19/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/05/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/02/2015

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 54 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on September 30, 1998, incurring low back injuries. She was diagnosed with lumbar degenerative disc disease, lumbar radiculopathy, lumbar facet arthropathy and a lumbosacral sprain. Treatments included physical therapy, home exercise program, lumbar facet injections, pain medications, topical analgesic patches and gels and work modifications. Currently, the injured worker complained of persistent lumbar pain and bilateral sciatica radiating down into the lower extremities with numbness, tingling and shooting, burning spasms. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization included left lumbar medial branch block.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Left lumbar MBB (medial branch block) at L4-5, L5-S1 with anesthesia, X-ray and fluoroscopic guidance: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), low back, lumbar and thoracic (acute and chronic), facet joint medial branch 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 chapter and pg 36.

Decision rationale: According to the guidelines, Criteria for the use of diagnostic blocks for facet "mediated" pain: Clinical presentation should be consistent with facet joint pain, signs & symptoms. 1. One set of diagnostic medial branch blocks is required with a response of 70%. The pain response should last at least 2 hours for Lidocaine. 2. Limited to patients with low-back pain that is non-radicular and at no more than two levels bilaterally. 3. There is documentation of failure of conservative treatment (including home exercise, PT and NSAIDs) prior to the procedure for at least 4-6 weeks. 4. No more than 2 facet joint levels are injected in one session (see above for medial branch block levels). 5. Recommended volume of no more than 0.5 cc of injectate is given to each joint. 6. No pain medication from home should be taken for at least 4 hours prior to the diagnostic block and for 4 to 6 hours afterward. 7. Opioids should not be given as a sedative during the procedure. 8. The use of IV sedation (including other agents such as midazolam) may be grounds to negate the results of a diagnostic block, and should only be given in cases of extreme anxiety. 9. The patient should document pain relief with an instrument such as a VAS scale, emphasizing the importance of recording the maximum pain relief and maximum duration of pain. The patient should also keep medication use and activity logs to support subjective reports of better pain control. 10. Diagnostic facet blocks should not be performed in patients in whom a surgical procedure is anticipated. (Resnick, 2005) 11. Diagnostic facet blocks should not be performed in patients who have had a previous fusion procedure at the planned injection level. In this case, the claimant had a diagnosis of radiculopathy with areas of decreased sensation in the lumbar region. Epidural injections were planned which indicate radiculopathy as well. The request for MBB does not meet the criteria above and is not medically necessary.