

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0178145		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/18/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	06/11/2014
<b>Decision Date:</b>	10/21/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	09/01/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	09/10/2015

### 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:

This is a 47 year old female with a date of injury on 6-11-2014. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for lumbar degenerative disc disease. According to the progress report dated 7-20-2015, the injured worker complained of low back pain. She described the pain as burning and sharp, 90 percent in the lower back and 10 percent in the left thigh. It was noted that she had been offered an epidural steroid injection, which she declined. Per the treating physician (7-20-2015), the employee was not currently working. The physical exam (7-20-2015) revealed normal sensation in the bilateral lower extremities. Treatment has included one month of physical therapy and medication. It was noted (7-20-2015) that magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) from 4-20-2015 showed bilateral foraminal stenosis, most severe at L3-L4, moderately at L4-L5. The request for authorization dated 8-21-2015 was for physical therapy and steroid injection. The original Utilization Review (UR) (9-1-2015) non-certified a request for epidural steroid injection for the lumbar spine.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Epidural steroid injection for the lumbar spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

**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.