

Case Number:	CM15-0063183		
Date Assigned:	04/09/2015	Date of Injury:	08/29/2012
Decision Date:	05/15/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/23/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/02/2015

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: 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 42 year old female who sustained an industrial injury to her neck and shoulder on August 29, 2012. The injured worker was diagnosed with cervicalgia, cervical radiculopathy, myofascial pain, facet mediated pain and occipital neuralgia. Past treatments included diagnostic testing, physical therapy, epidural steroid injection (ESI) and medications. According to the primary treating physician's progress report on February 19, 2015, the injured worker continues to experience neck and shoulder pain associated with stiffness. Examination of the cervical spine demonstrated paraspinal tenderness to palpation with painful range of motion on extension and rotation. Symmetrical sensation and strength of the bilateral upper extremities were noted. Current medications are listed as Ibuprofen and topical analgesics. A Toradol injection was administered at the office visit. Treatment plan consists of physical therapy for strengthening and creation of a home exercise program, remain on modified duty restrictions, meloxicam, continue with topical analgesics, and the current request for a bilateral C5-C6 interlaminar epidural steroid injection (ESI).

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Bilateral C5-C6 interlaminar epidural steroid injection: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs) 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 does not contain physical exam findings of radiculopathy. MRI of the cervical spine dated 2/1/13 documented that there was no evidence of vertebral body fracture, spondylolisthesis, or scoliosis. The spinal cord was normal in significant characteristics, contour and volume. There was a mild spinal canal stenosis observed at C5-C6 due to broad based disc osteophyte complex and protrusion with diffuse posterior annular fissuring. Above mentioned citation conveys radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. Radiculopathy is defined as two of the following: weakness, sensation deficit, or diminished/absent reflexes associated with the relevant dermatome. These findings are not documented, so medical necessity is not affirmed. As the first criteria is not met, the request is not medically necessary.