

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0068812		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/16/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	04/09/2012
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/15/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	03/06/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	04/10/2015

### 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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine

### 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 45 year old male with an industrial injury dated 04/09/2012. His diagnoses include radiculopathy of lumbar spine, lumbar spondylosis and lumbar spine pain. Prior treatments include epidural steroid injections, acupuncture and medications. He presents on 02/04/2015 with complaints of low back pain. Physical exam revealed pain with lumbar extension. Palpation of the lumbar facet revealed pain on both sides of the lumbar/sacral region. The provider documents that acupuncture and epidural steroid injections have not been effective. The treatment plan for pain management was to try lumbar facet blocks.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Bilateral lumbar facet block L4-L5, L5-S1 under fluoroscopic guidance and monitored anesthesia:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back Chapter.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back Chapter/Facet Joint Diagnostic Blocks (Injections).

**Decision rationale:** Per the MTUS Guidelines, facet-joint injections are of questionable merit. The treatment offers no significant long-term functional benefit, nor does it reduce the risk for surgery. This request is for diagnostic blocks which are not addressed by the MTUS Guidelines. The ODG recommends no more than one set of medial branch diagnostic blocks prior to facet neurotomy, if neurotomy is chosen as an option for treatment. The clinical presentation should be consistent with facet joint pain, signs and symptoms. The procedure should be limited to patients with low-back pain that is non-radicular and no more than two levels bilaterally. There should be documentation of failure of conservative treatment, including home exercise, physical therapy and NSAIDs for at least 4-6 weeks prior to the procedure. No more than two facet joint levels should be injected in one session. Diagnostic facet blocks should not be performed in patients in whom a surgical procedure is anticipated or in patients who have had a previous fusion procedure at the planned injection level. The patient has already had one set of diagnostic facet blocks with reported 70% relieve for only a few days. A second set of diagnostic facet blocks is not warranted based on the recommendations of the MTUS Guidelines. The request for bilateral lumbar facet block L4-L5, L5-S1 under fluoroscopic guidance and monitored anesthesia is not medically appropriate.