

Case Number:	CM15-0073130		
Date Assigned:	04/23/2015	Date of Injury:	12/23/2013
Decision Date:	05/20/2015	UR Denial Date:	03/12/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/16/2015

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 51-year-old male who sustained a work related injury, December 23, 2013. While picking lemons, he fell of a ladder with complaints of back pain. He was treated with medication and physical therapy. According to a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician's progress report, dated February 5, 2015, the injured worker presented for evaluation of back pain. On examination of the lumbar spine; paraspinal spasm present, trigger points L5, right sciatica and lumbar paraspinal L4-5 right side, and range of motion 25% reduced. Impression is documented as lumbar sacral strain. Treatment plan included medications, pending epidural steroid injection and follow-up in a month. At issue, is the request for authorization of caudal epidural under ultrasound guidance, L5 region.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Caudal Epidural under ultrasound guidance L5 region: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines epidural injections Page(s): 47.

Decision rationale: According to the guidelines, the 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 electro diagnostic 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 researches do not support "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or the therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections. In this case, the claimant's prior MRI showed DJD. Clinical exam findings did not indicate radiculopathy. According to the ACOEM guidelines, invasive procedures such as epidural injections are not recommended due to short-term benefit. Based on the guidelines, criteria and clinical information, the request for a caudal ESI is not medically necessary.