

Case Number:	CM15-0075292		
Date Assigned:	04/27/2015	Date of Injury:	10/08/2012
Decision Date:	05/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/20/2015

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:

This 53-year-old male sustained an industrial injury to the low back on 10/8/12. Previous treatment included magnetic resonance imaging, physical therapy, nerve root block, epidural steroid injections, home exercise and medications. In a pain medicine reevaluation dated 3/16/15, the injured worker complained of low back pain rated 4-6/10 on the visual analog scale with radiation down the right lower extremity. The injured worker was status post right L4 selective nerve root block (10/31/14). The injured worker reported 50-80% improvement for two weeks. Current diagnoses included lumbar disc degeneration, lumbar facet arthropathy and lumbar spine radiculitis. The treatment plan included transforaminal block under fluoroscopy, right L4-5, L5-S1, continuing epidural steroid injections, continuing home exercise and medications (Naproxen).

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Transforaminal block under fluoroscopy, right L4-5, L5-S1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Criteria for the use of Epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG, low back pain 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 selective block 5 months prior. The recent exam notes indicate radicular findings with a positive straight leg raise test on the right. Invasive procedures such as blocks have short-term benefit. The request for an additional block does not meet the guidelines specification and is not medically necessary.