

Case Number:	CM15-0078067		
Date Assigned:	04/29/2015	Date of Injury:	09/08/2008
Decision Date:	05/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/23/2015

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 44 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 09/08/2008 after slipping on a spilled substance. On provider visit dated 04/01/2015 the injured worker has reported low back pain that transfers to bilateral hips and legs. On examination he was noted to have an unsteady gait. Lumbar spine was noted to have tenderness to of the lower lumbar segments and pain with range of motion. A decreased sensation and strength in right leg was noted. The diagnoses have included lumbar radiculitis, subluxation lumbar and low back pain. Treatment to date has included x-ray, medication and laboratory studies. The provider requested Left Lumbar Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection at L4-5 under fluoroscopy.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Left Lumbar Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection at L4-5 under fluoroscopy:
 Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Treatment, Integrated Treatment/Disability Duration Guidelines, Low Back-Lumbar and Thoracic (Acute and Chronic), Criteria for the use of Epidural Steroid Injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines epidural injection 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 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. In this case, the claimant had physician findings as well as MRI findings (6/2014) of S1 nerve root involvement. There was severe intractable pain that had failed conservative treatment. The request for ESI is appropriate and medically necessary.