

Case Number:	CM15-0091327		
Date Assigned:	05/15/2015	Date of Injury:	06/26/2012
Decision Date:	06/16/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/15/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/12/2015

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: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 50 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 06/26/2012. She has reported injury to the left hip and low back. The diagnoses have included lumbar sprain/strain; and lumbar disc bulge at L3-4 and L4-5, with left lower extremity radiculopathy. Treatment to date has included medications, diagnostics, injections, physical therapy. A progress note from the treating physician, dated 04/07/2015, documented a follow-up visit with the injured worker. Currently, the injured worker complains of increased low back pain, radiating to the back of the left leg to the bottom of the foot; weakness and numbness and tingling; and she is unable to take medications due to liver problems per her primary care physician. Objective findings included antalgic gait; unable to sit with pressure on the left; limited lumbar spine range of motion; and there is positive paraspinal tenderness to the lumbar spine. The treatment plan has included the request for lumbar epidural steroid injection, quantity: 1.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection, Qty 1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections (ESIs)

Page(s): 46. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines: Low Back, Lumbar & Thoracic, Acute & Chronic - Epidural steroid injections (ESIs).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural Steroid injections, page 46.

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines recommend ESI as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy); however, radiculopathy must be documented on physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or Electrodiagnostic testing, not provided here. Submitted reports have not demonstrated any correlating neurological deficits or remarkable diagnostics to support the epidural injections. In addition, to repeat a LESI in the therapeutic phase, repeat blocks should be based on continued objective documented decreasing pain and increasing functional improvement, including at least 50% pain relief with associated reduction of medication use for six to eight weeks. Criteria for repeating the epidurals have not been met or established as the patient continues to treat for chronic pain without functional benefit from previous injections in terms of decreased pharmacological formulation, increased ADLs and decreased medical utilization. There is also no documented failed conservative trial of physical therapy, medications, activity modification, or other treatment modalities to support for the epidural injection. Lumbar epidural injections may be an option for delaying surgical intervention; however, there is no surgery planned or identified pathological lesion noted. The Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection, Qty 1 is not medically necessary and appropriate.