

Case Number:	CM15-0092104		
Date Assigned:	05/18/2015	Date of Injury:	11/20/2013
Decision Date:	06/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/13/2015

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, Pain Management

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 36-year-old female sustained an industrial injury on 11/20/13. She subsequently reported Diagnoses include lumbar strain. Treatments to date include x-ray and MRI testing, TENS therapy, acupuncture, injections and prescription pain medications. The injured worker continues to back and low back pain with radiation to the buttocks. Upon examination, there was diminished range of motion, sensation is intact on the left but diminished on the right lateral upper and lower leg, Patrick's sign and Gaenslen's maneuver are positive on the right side only. Straight leg raise testing was negative bilaterally. A request for Bilateral SI (sacroiliac) joint injections was made by the treating physician

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Bilateral SI (sacroiliac) joint injections: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-328.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG Hip and Pelvis Chapter, Sacroiliac Blocks.

Decision rationale: The California Medical Treatment and Utilization Schedule do not directly reference sacroiliac joint injections. Section 9792. 23.5 Low Back Complaints of the California Code of Regulations, Title 8, page 6 states the following: "The Administrative Director adopts and incorporates by reference the Low Back Complaints (ACOEM Practice Guidelines, 2nd Edition (2004), Chapter 12) into the MTUS from the ACOEM Practice Guidelines." ACOEM Medical Practice Guidelines Chapter 12 on page 300 state the following regarding injections: "Invasive techniques (e.g., local injections and facet-joint injections of cortisone and lidocaine) are of questionable merit. Although epidural steroid injections may afford short-term improvement in leg pain and sensory deficits in patients with nerve root compression due to a herniated nucleus pulposus, this treatment offers no significant long term functional benefit, nor does it reduce the need for surgery. Despite the fact that proof is still lacking, many pain physicians believe that diagnostic and/or therapeutic injections may have benefit in patients presenting in the transitional phase between acute and chronic pain." Given a lack of direct reference from the California Medical Treatment and Utilization Schedule and ACOEM, the recommendations regarding sacroiliac joint injections in the Official Disability Guidelines Chapter on Hip and Pelvis are cited below: Recommended as an option if failed at least 4-6 weeks of aggressive conservative therapy as indicated below. Sacroiliac dysfunction is poorly defined and the diagnosis is often difficult to make due to the presence of other low back pathology (including spinal stenosis and facet arthropathy). Criteria for the use of sacroiliac blocks: 1. The history and physical should suggest the diagnosis (with documentation of at least 3 positive exam findings as listed above). 2. Diagnostic evaluation must first address any other possible pain generators. 3. The patient has had and failed at least 4-6 weeks of aggressive conservative therapy including PT, home exercise and medication management. 4. Blocks are performed under fluoroscopy. (Hansen, 2003) 5. A positive diagnostic response is recorded as 80% for the duration of the local anesthetic. If the first block is not positive, a second diagnostic block is not performed. 6. If steroids are injected during the initial injection, the duration of pain relief should be at least 6 weeks with at least > 70% pain relief recorded for this period. 7. In the treatment or therapeutic phase (after the stabilization is completed), the suggested frequency for repeat blocks is 2 months or longer between each injection, provided that at least >70% pain relief is obtained for 6 weeks. 8. The block is not to be performed on the same day as a lumbar epidural steroid injection (ESI), transforaminal ESI, facet joint injection or medial branch block. 9. In the treatment or therapeutic phase, the interventional procedures should be repeated only as necessary judging by the medical necessity criteria, and these should be limited to a maximum of 4 times for local anesthetic and steroid blocks over a period of 1 year." Regarding the request for sacroiliac joint injections, guidelines recommend sacroiliac blocks as an option if the patient has failed at least 4 to 6 weeks of aggressive conservative therapy. The criteria include: history and physical examination should suggest a diagnosis with at least three positive exam findings and diagnostic evaluation must first address any other possible pain generators. Within the documentation available for review, there is no indication of at least three positive examination findings suggesting a diagnosis of sacroiliac joint dysfunction. In fact, many progress notes only note tenderness in the SIJ area, but no faber's or gaenslen's signs that are positive. The currently requested sacroiliac joint injections are not medically necessary.