

Case Number:	CM15-0096209		
Date Assigned:	05/26/2015	Date of Injury:	11/08/2012
Decision Date:	06/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/30/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/19/2015

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: New Jersey, Alabama, California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular Medicine

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 30-year-old male, who sustained an industrial/work injury on 11/8/12. He reported initial complaints of mid and low back, shoulder, and neck pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar disc displacement with radiculopathy, myositis/myalgia, sprain/strain, cervical sprain/strain and radiculopathy; thoracic sprain/strain; shoulder rotator cuff syndrome and sprain/strain, and insomnia. Treatment to date has included medication, diagnostics, physical therapy, chiropractic therapy, acupuncture, pain management consultation, and epidural steroid injections. MRI results were reported on 2/6/13 of the lumbar spine that reported L5-S1 3-4 mm posterior disc bulge effacing the ventral surface of the thecal sac resulting in mild to moderate right neural foraminal narrowing with no evidence of abnormality within the exiting or traversing nerve roots. X-Rays results were reported on 7/9/13 of the lumbosacral spine demonstrated minimal spina bifida occulta involving the 1st sacral segment, and slight congenital narrowing of the L5-S1 intervertebral disc space. Currently, the injured worker complains of dull and achy low back pain rated 10/10 that radiates to the R>L lower extremities and pain in the right knee and foot. Per the primary physician's progress report (PR-2) on 4/21/15, there is a 3-4 mm disc bulge at L5-S1. Exam from 1/23/15 reported cervical tenderness palpable, bilaterally, over the paracervical muscles with myospasm and bilateral trapezius muscles. There was normal wrist, hip, thigh, and ankle exam. There is decreased sensation of bilateral L5-S1 dermatomes and motor strength of 4/5 of bilateral extensor hallucis longus and plantar muscles. Current plan of care included medication and other pain management. The requested treatments include Selective Nerve Root Block for Bilateral L5-S1.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Selective Nerve Root Block for Bilateral L5-S1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 309.

Decision rationale: According MTUS guidelines, "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". According to ODG guidelines regarding facets injections, "Under study. Current evidence is conflicting as to this procedure and at this time, no more than one therapeutic intra-articular block is suggested. If successful (pain relief of at least 50% for a duration of at least 6 weeks), the recommendation is to proceed to a medial branch diagnostic block and subsequent neurotomy (if the medial branch block is positive). If a therapeutic facet joint block is undertaken, it is suggested that it be used in consort with other evidence based conservative care (activity, exercise, etc.) to facilitate functional improvement. (Dreyfuss, 2003) (Colorado, 2001) (Manchikanti , 2003) (Boswell, 2005) See Segmental rigidity (diagnosis). In spite of the overwhelming lack of evidence for the long-term effectiveness of intra-articular steroid facet joint injections, this remains a popular treatment modality. Intra-articular facet joint injections have been popularly utilized as a therapeutic procedure, but are not currently recommended as a treatment modality in most evidence-based reviews as their benefit remains controversial." Furthermore and according to ODG guidelines, Criteria for use of therapeutic intra-articular and medial branch blocks are as follows: 1. No more than one therapeutic intra-articular block is recommended. 2. There should be no evidence of radicular pain, spinal stenosis, or previous fusion. 3. If successful (initial pain relief of 70%, plus pain relief of at least 50% for a duration of at least 6 weeks), the recommendation is to proceed to a medial branch diagnostic block and subsequent neurotomy (if the medial branch block is positive). 4. No more than 2 joint levels may be blocked at any one time. 5. There should be evidence of a formal plan of additional evidence-based activity and exercise in addition to facet joint injection. In this case, there is no documentation of facet-mediated pain; there is no clear evidence or documentation that lumbar and sacral facets are main pain generator. The patient has a working diagnosis of lumbar radiculopathy with clear radicular objective findings on examination. Therefore, the request for Selective Nerve Root Block for Bilateral L5-S1 is not medically necessary.