

Case Number:	CM15-0096935		
Date Assigned:	05/27/2015	Date of Injury:	05/28/1997
Decision Date:	06/25/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/13/2015
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

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 59-year-old, female who sustained a work related injury on 5/28/97. The diagnoses have included lumbar disc disease and lumbar postlaminectomy syndrome. Treatments have included oral medications and Toradol injections. In the Comprehensive Follow-Up Evaluation dated 5/5/15, the injured worker complains of feeling worse. She has sharp pain shooting down her left leg. She rates the pain level an 8/10. She has difficulty standing or sitting without pain. She states that medication does help. She has decreased sensation in the left L5 dermatome. She has a positive left straight leg raise at 30 degrees. The treatment plan includes requests for authorization of a caudal epidural steroid injection and for refills of medications.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

L5 Caudal Epidural Injection with Sedation: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Epidural steroid injections Page(s): 46.

Decision rationale: The MTUS Guidelines state that epidural steroid injections are recommended as an option for treatment of lumbar radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy) and can offer short-term pain relief, but use should be in conjunction with other rehab efforts, including continuing a home exercise program. The criteria as stated in the MTUS Guidelines for epidural steroid injection use for chronic pain includes the following: 1. radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing, 2. Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment (exercise, physical methods, NSAIDs, and muscle relaxants), 3. Injections should be performed using fluoroscopy 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, and 8. Current research does not support "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or the therapeutic phase, and instead only up to 2 injections are recommended. In the case of this worker, there were insufficient records to show previous other treatment methods tried and failed besides only opioids and NSAIDs before considering a steroid epidural injection. In addition, there was no MRI report found in the documentation provided which corroborates the physical findings suggestive of L5 spinal radiculopathy. Therefore, at this time, the request for L5 epidural injection with sedation will be considered medically unnecessary until this is provided.