

Case Number:	CM15-0097371		
Date Assigned:	05/28/2015	Date of Injury:	11/17/2013
Decision Date:	07/03/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/20/2015

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: North Carolina

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 52-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 11/17/2013. He reported developing pain in the right hand, wrist and forearm and in the neck. Diagnoses include right wrist sprain/strain, tenosynovitis, right wrist ganglion cyst, and multilevel cervical disc disease including compression fracture, herniated discs, disc bulge, spondylosis and stenosis. Treatments to date include activity modification, physical therapy, acupuncture treatments. Currently, he complained of ongoing right arm numbness, pain and weakness and a palpable cyst on the right forearm. On 4/28/15, the physical examination documented decreased sensation in the right forearm, thumb, and diffuse weakness in the right upper extremity. There was a palpable loose-sided cystic mass in the radial forearm. The treating diagnoses included displacement of cervical intervertebral disc without myelopathy, brachial neuritis or radiculitis, cervicgia and ganglion of tendon sheath. The plan of care included transluminal cervical epidural steroid injection to right C4-5 and C5-6 levels.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Right translaminar cervical 4-6: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 8 Neck and Upper Back Complaints.

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

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on epidural steroid injections (ESI) states: 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 electro-diagnostic 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. The provided clinical documentation for review does not show dermatomal radiculopathy on exam that is corroborated by imaging or EMG studies. Therefore, the request does not meet all criteria as outlined above and is not certified.