

Case Number:	CM14-0143938		
Date Assigned:	09/12/2014	Date of Injury:	12/03/2008
Decision Date:	10/23/2014	UR Denial Date:	08/16/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/05/2014

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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Internal Medicine and is licensed to practice in Maryland. 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/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

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 patient is a 34-year-old with date of injury December 3, 2008. The mechanism of injury is not stated in the available medical records. The patient has complained of low back pain since the date of injury. He has had lower back surgery (hemilaminectomy and microdiscectomy at L4-5) and has also been treated with epidural steroid injections, physical therapy and medications. MRI of the lumbar spine dated December of 2013 revealed findings consistent with a right hemilaminectomy and discectomy at L4-5 as well as a residual posterior disc bulge at L4-5. Objective: decreased and painful range of motion of the lumbar spine, positive straight leg raise on the right, decreased strength of right extensor halluc, decreased sensation to light touch in the right anterior lower leg. Diagnoses: L5 radiculopathy, post laminectomy syndrome. Treatment plan and request: epidural steroid injection L4-5 with sedation.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Transforaminal epidural steroid injection (ESI) at right L4-5 with sedation: Upheld

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

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

Decision rationale: This 34-year-old male has complained of low back pain since date of injury of December 2, 2008. He has had lower back surgery (hemilaminectomy and microdiscectomy at L4-5) and has also been treated with epidural steroid injections, physical therapy and medications. According to the Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, the following criteria must be met for an epidural steroid injection to be considered medically necessary: 1) Radiculopathy must be documented by physical examination and corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing. 2) Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment (exercises, physical methods, NSAIDs [non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs] 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. The available medical records do not include documentation that meet criteria (7) above. Specifically, there is no provided objective documentation that pain and functional improvement were improved by previous epidural steroid injection. On the basis of the above MTUS guidelines and available provider documentation, epidural steroid injection of L4-5 with sedation is not medically necessary or appropriate.