



Medical Review Institute of America, Inc.
America's External Review Network

DATE OF REVIEW: April 30, 2008

IRO Case #:

Description of the services in dispute:

L4-5, L5-S1 facet blocks (#64475, #64476, #77003)

A description of the qualifications for each physician or other health care provider who reviewed the decision

The physician who provided this review is board certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery. This reviewer completed a fellowship in Pediatric Orthopaedic Surgery. This reviewer is a member of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and the Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America. This reviewer has been in active practice since 2000.

Review Outcome

Upon independent review the reviewer finds that the previous adverse determination/adverse determinations should be:

Upheld

Provide a description of the review outcome that clearly states whether or not medical necessity exists for each of the health care services in dispute.

Bilateral facet joint blocks at L4-5 and L5-S1 (#64475, #64476, #77003) are not medically necessary in this patient.

Information provided to the IRO for review

Received from the State:

Confirmation of Receipt of a Request for a Review by an Independent Review Organization
Company Request for IRO

Request for Review by an Independent Review Organization, 4/8/08

Letter, 2/27/08

Letter, 3/6/08

Received from the Insurance Company:

Request for Review by an Independent Review Organization, 4/8/08

Confirmation of Receipt of a Request for a Review by an Independent Review Organization
Company Request for IRO

Letter, 2/27/08

Letter, 3/6/08

Spine Care, clinical and procedure notes 7/20/07–2/18/08

MRI Lumbar spine, 8/10/06

Management Company, Medical Management Updates 2/22/08–3/7/08

Patient clinical history [summary]

The patient is a female diagnosed by Dr. as having "Lumbar Syndrome" and/or "Bilateral Facet Arthropathy L4–5, L5–S1." She has been treated with right L4–5 and L5–S1 facet joint blocks in August, 2007 and has recently been recommended to undergo bilateral L4–5 and L5–S1 facet joint blocks. Initial request was non-certified by ODG guidelines. Appeal also non-certified by ODG guidelines. Currently, IRO request is submitted by DC.

Analysis and explanation of the decision include clinical basis, findings and conclusions used to support the decision.

1) Request for facet joint blocks L4–5, L5–S1.

Bilateral facet joint blocks at L4–5 and L5–S1 are not medically necessary in this patient.

Review documents submitted contain essentially no objective physical exam information. MRI of the lumbar spine done 8/10/06 shows HNP central-to-right at L5–S1 displacing the right S1 nerve root. There is no imaging documentation to suggest facet arthropathy. On 2/18/08, Dr. documented that the patient responded to right-sided L4–5 and L5–S1 facet blocks done 6 months earlier with "relief of pain on the right side of her back and subsequent aggravation of pain on the left side of her back." The patient is noted to have actively treated depression. There is no documentation of a psychosocial screen or evaluation by a pain management physician included in the review materials.

A description and the source of the screening criteria or other clinical basis used to make the decision:

From ODG, Low Back, Facet joint intra-articular injections (therapeutic blocks):

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 (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 therapy.

ODG, Low Back, Facet joint intra-articular injections (therapeutic blocks)