

US Resolutions Inc.

An Independent Review Organization

71 Court Street

Belfast, Maine 04915

Notice of Independent Review Decision

DATE OF REVIEW: AUGUST 28, 2008

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE

Medical necessity for cervical ESI #2 under fluoroscopic control

A DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR EACH PHYSICIAN OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WHO REVIEWED THE DECISION

MD, Board Certified Orthopedic Surgeon

REVIEW OUTCOME

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

- Upheld (Agree)
- Overturned (Disagree)
- Partially Overturned (Agree in part/Disagree in part)

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.

The reviewer finds that medical necessity does not exist for cervical ESI #2 under fluoroscopic control.

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW

Office notes, Dr. 01/19/05, 02/02/05, 02/22/05, 03/07/06, 03/27/06, 04/25/06, 05/03/07, 05/24/07, 06/11/07, 06/25/07, 08/01/07, 08/02/07, 11/27/07, 02/19/08, 05/20/08, 06/05/08, 06/11/08, 07/15/08
Peer review, Dr. 06/18/08
Office note, Dr. 07/14/08
Peer review, Dr. 07/16/08
Carrier letter, 08/14/08
ODG Guidelines and Treatment Guidelines

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

The claimant is a male with a date of injury of xx/xx/xx an injury to the neck region. The claimant has had cervical surgery in 2000 and 2001. The clinical notes start in 2005 with pain management, in that year the claimant had three cervical epidurals, the doctor noted the claimant's symptoms were greatly relieved. Again in 2006 the claimant received three injections, and good results were noted. The claimant received two epidural injections in 2007 giving improvement. The diagnosis was chronic neck pain, cervical radiculopathy the right greater than the left, chronic myofascial pain syndrome, and left cervical plexitis.

ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION OF THE DECISION INCLUDE CLINICAL BASIS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS USED TO SUPPORT THE DECISION

The available notes do not contain objective findings of radiculopathy. The response to the first injection is not clearly documented. This is now a chronic situation and chronic duration of symptoms substantially decreases the success rates of such injections.

All in all I do not believe this case meets criteria for a second epidural steroid injection. The reviewer finds that medical necessity does not exist for cervical ESI #2 under fluoroscopic

Official Disability Guidelines Treatment in Worker's Comp 2008 Updates. Neck, ESI Recommended as an option for treatment of radicular pain (defined as pain in dermatomal distribution with corroborative findings of radiculopathy). See specific criteria for use below. In a recent Cochrane review, there was one study that reported improvement in pain and function at four weeks and also one year in individuals with chronic neck pain with radiation. (Peloso-Cochrane, 2006) (Peloso, 2005) Other reviews have reported moderate short-term and long-term evidence of success in managing cervical radiculopathy with interlaminar ESIs. (Stav, 1993) (Castagnera, 1994) Some have also reported moderate evidence of management of cervical nerve root pain using a transforaminal approach. (Bush, 1996) (Cyteval, 2004) A recent retrospective review of interlaminar cervical ESIs found that approximately two-thirds of patients with symptomatic cervical radiculopathy from disc herniation were able to avoid surgery for up to 1 year with treatment. Success rate was improved with earlier injection (< 100 days from diagnosis). (Lin, 2006) There have been recent case reports of cerebellar infarct and brainstem herniation as well as spinal cord infarction after cervical transforaminal injection. (Beckman, 2006) (Ludwig, 2005) Quadriplegia with a cervical ESI at C6-7 has also been noted (Bose, 2005) and the American Society of Anesthesiologists Closed Claims Project database revealed 9 deaths or cases of brain injury after cervical ESI (1970-1999). (Fitzgibbon, 2004) These reports were in contrast to a retrospective review of 1,036 injections that showed that there were no catastrophic complications with the procedure. (Ma, 2005) The American Academy of Neurology recently concluded that epidural steroid injections may lead to an improvement in radicular lumbosacral pain between 2 and 6 weeks following the injection, but they do not affect impairment of function or the need for surgery and do not provide long-term pain relief beyond 3 months, and there is insufficient evidence to make any recommendation for the use of epidural steroid injections to treat radicular cervical pain. (Armon, 2007) There is evidence for short-term symptomatic improvement of radicular symptoms with epidural or selective root injections with corticosteroids, but these treatments did not appear to decrease the rate of open surgery. (Haldeman, 2008) See the Low Back Chapter for more information and references.

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 electrodiagnostic 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 only be offered if there is at least 50% pain relief for six to eight weeks, with a general recommendation of no more than 4 blocks per region per year.
- (8) Repeat injections should be based on continued objective documented pain and function response.
- (9) 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.
- (10) It is currently not recommended to perform epidural blocks on the same day of treatment as facet blocks or stellate ganglion blocks or sympathetic blocks as this may lead to improper diagnosis or unnecessary treatment.
- (11) Cervical and lumbar epidural steroid injection should not be performed on the same day.

A DESCRIPTION AND THE SOURCE OF THE SCREENING CRITERIA OR OTHER CLINICAL BASIS USED TO MAKE THE DECISION:

- ACOEM- AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE UM KNOWLEDGEBASE
- AHCPR- AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH & QUALITY GUIDELINES
- DWC- DIVISION OF WORKERS COMPENSATION POLICIES OR GUIDELINES
- EUROPEAN GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN
- INTERQUAL CRITERIA
- MEDICAL JUDGEMENT, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED MEDICAL STANDARDS
- MERCY CENTER CONSENSUS CONFERENCE GUIDELINES
- MILLIMAN CARE GUIDELINES
- ODG- OFFICIAL DISABILITY GUIDELINES & TREATMENT GUIDELINES
- PRESSLEY REED, THE MEDICAL DISABILITY ADVISOR
- TEXAS GUIDELINES FOR CHIROPRACTIC QUALITY ASSURANCE & PRACTICE PARAMETERS
- TEXAS TACADA GUIDELINES
- TMF SCREENING CRITERIA MANUAL

- PEER REVIEWED NATIONALLY ACCEPTED MEDICAL LITERATURE
(PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)
- OTHER EVIDENCE BASED, SCIENTIFICALLY VALID, OUTCOME
FOCUSED GUIDELINES (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)