

Applied Assessments LLC

An Independent Review Organization

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Notice of Independent Review Decision

DATE OF REVIEW: DECEMBER 19, 2008

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE

SI Joint Injection

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

Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Subspecialty Board Certified in Pain Management

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)

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW

OD Guidelines

Denial Letters 11/12/08 and 10/27/08

Radiology Reports 8/1/08 and 8/18/08

Record from Dr. 10/22/08

Letter from 12/4/08

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

This is a xx year old man reportedly injured on xx/xx/xx when his 18 wheeler turned. He had several problems, but the issue related to the low back and right leg pain. He had not completely improved with chiropractic treatments. He finds bearing weight on the right side increases his pain. Shifting weight to the left reduces it. The pain is in the low back and goes down the right posterior thigh and leg. His MRI was normal. Dr. described a normal neurological exam, a slightly positive SLR and pain on stressing the right, but not the left SI joint and the LS junction. He wants to perform a bilateral diagnostic and therapeutic SI injection.

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

The ODG is somewhat restrictive in its view of the SI injection. It requires at least 4-6 weeks of aggressive therapy. It recognizes difficulty in establishing this diagnosis. This man had chiropractic care, but the Reviewer does not know what therapies were provided from the medical note from Dr. No single clinical test can be diagnostic of SI joint dysfunction. Several are described in the ODG. The Reviewer does not know which ones Dr. performed. We therefore do not have the 3 diagnostic tests required by the ODG. The information provided does not mean this man does not have SI problems, but only that the necessary documentation has not been provided. Reconsideration can be done with this additional material.

Sacroiliac joint injections (SJI)

Recommended as an option if failed at least 4-6 weeks of aggressive conservative therapy. See the [Hip & Pelvis Chapter](#) for more information, references, and ODG Criteria for the use of sacroiliac blocks.

Sacroiliac joint blocks

Recommended as an option if failed at least 4-6 weeks of aggressive conservative therapy as indicated below. Sacroiliac dysfunction is poorly defined and the diagnosis is often difficult to make due to the presence of other low back pathology (including spinal stenosis and facet arthropathy). The diagnosis is also difficult to make as pain symptoms may depend on the region of the SI joint that is involved (anterior, posterior, and/or extra-articular ligaments). Pain may radiate into the buttock, groin and entire ipsilateral lower limb, although if pain is present above L5, it is not thought to be from the SI joint.

Innervation: The anterior portion is thought to be innervated by the posterior rami of the L1-S2 roots and the posterior portion by the posterior rami of L4-S3. although the actual innervation remains unclear.

Anterior innervation may also be supplied by the obturator nerve, superior gluteal nerve and/or lumbosacral trunk. (Vallejo, 2006) Other research supports innervation by the S1 and S2 sacral dorsal rami.

Etiology: includes degenerative joint disease, joint laxity, and trauma (such as a fall to the buttock). The main cause is SI joint disruption from significant pelvic trauma.

Diagnosis: Specific tests for motion palpation and pain provocation have been described for SI joint dysfunction: Cranial Shear Test; Extension Test; Flamingo Test; Fortin Finger Test; Gaenslen's Test; Gillet's Test (One Legged-Stork Test); Patrick's Test (FABER); Pelvic Compression Test; Pelvic Distraction Test; Pelvic Rock Test; Resisted Abduction Test (REAB); Sacroiliac Shear Test; Standing Flexion Test; Seated Flexion Test; Thigh Thrust Test (POSH). Imaging studies are not helpful. It has been

questioned as to whether SI joint blocks are the “diagnostic gold standard.” The block is felt to show low sensitivity, and discordance has been noted between two consecutive blocks (questioning validity). ([Schwarzer, 1995](#)) There is also concern that pain relief from diagnostic blocks may be confounded by infiltration of extra-articular ligaments, adjacent muscles, or sheaths of the nerve roots themselves. Sacral lateral branch injections have demonstrated a lack of diagnostic power and area not endorsed for this purpose. ([Yin, 2003](#))

Treatment: There is limited research suggesting therapeutic blocks offer long-term effect. There should be evidence of a trial of aggressive conservative treatment (at least six weeks of a comprehensive exercise program, local icing, mobilization/manipulation and anti-inflammatories) as well as evidence of a clinical picture that is suggestive of sacroiliac injury and/or disease prior to a first SI joint block. If helpful, the blocks may be repeated; however, the frequency of these injections should be limited with attention placed on the comprehensive exercise program. ([Forst, 2006](#)) ([Berthelot, 2006](#)) ([van der Wurff, 2006](#)) ([Laslett, 2005](#)) ([Zelle, 2005](#)) ([McKenzie-Brown 2005](#)) ([Pekkafahli, 2003](#)) ([Manchikanti, 2003](#)) ([Slipman, 2001](#)) ([Nelemans-Cochrane, 2000](#)) See also [Intra-articular steroid hip injection](#); & [Sacroiliac joint radiofrequency neurotomy](#).

Criteria for the use of sacroiliac blocks:

- 1. The history and physical should suggest the diagnosis (with documentation of at least 3 positive exam findings as listed above).**
2. Diagnostic evaluation must first address any other possible pain generators.
- 3. The patient has had and failed at least 4-6 weeks of aggressive conservative therapy including PT, home exercise and medication management.**
4. Blocks are performed under fluoroscopy.
5. A positive diagnostic response is recorded as 80% for the duration of the local anesthetic. If the first block is not positive, a second diagnostic block is not performed.
6. If steroids are injected during the initial injection, the duration of pain relief should be at least 6 weeks with at least > 70% pain relief recorded for this period.
7. In the treatment or therapeutic phase (after the stabilization is completed), the suggested frequency for repeat blocks is 2 months or longer between each injection, provided that at least >70% pain relief is obtained for 6 weeks.
8. The block is not to be performed on the same day as a lumbar epidural steroid injection (ESI), transforaminal ESI, facet joint injection or medial branch block.
9. In the treatment or therapeutic phase, the interventional procedures should be repeated only as necessary judging by the medical necessity criteria, and these should be limited to a maximum of 4 times for local anesthetic and steroid blocks over a period of 1 year.

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)**