

SENT VIA EMAIL OR FAX ON
Nov/19/2010

Independent Resolutions Inc.

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NOTICE OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW DECISION

DATE OF REVIEW:

Nov/18/2010

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:

2nd Left Transfoaminal ESI L5/S1

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
Subspecialty Board Certified in Electrodiagnostic Medicine
Residency Training PMR and ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY

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 9/28/10 and 10/18/10
Dr. 8/19/10 thru 11/1/10
MRI 8/13/10

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY SUMMARY

This man reportedly injured his back lifting boxes on xx/xx/xx. He developed low back pain to the left leg. His MRI on 8/13/10 showed a broad protrusion at L4/5 with mild neural foraminal narrowing and a larger L5/S1 protrusion with bilateral neural foraminal narrowing and left S1 root S1 impingement. Dr. initial exam described intact sensation, but there was a reduction in the left ankle jerk. On 8/19, Dr. recommended and ESI. It apparently was performed on

9/10/10. He initially had more pain, but Dr. wrote in his 9/27 note stated 'we are waiting on his next epidural steroid injection.' There was now 70% relief. By 11/1, the improvement was 80%. There is a question about resuming PT after the injection (10/11/10).

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

The ODG generally approves an ESI for the treatment of an acute radiculopathy. This man appears to have met the requirement for the radiculopathy. The issue then is the justification for a second ESI. The ODG does not justify the use of a series of 3. A second ESI can be justified when there is at least 70% relief lasting for 6-8 weeks before the pain recurs. He is currently about 10 weeks. He was still at 50-80% with relief by week 7. There is nothing noted about any deterioration to justify a second therapeutic injections. The request by Dr. for a second block was noted only days after the first ESI, long before the ODG criteria would be met. This would imply that he was looking at a series, perhaps limited to 2. Since there has been lasting improvement, there is nothing to justify a second ESI at this time.

ODG:

Epidural steroid injections (ESIs), therapeutic

Criteria for the use of Epidural steroid injections:

Note: The purpose of ESI is to reduce pain and inflammation, thereby facilitating progress in more active treatment programs, reduction of medication use and avoiding surgery, but this treatment alone offers no significant long-term functional benefit.

- (1) Radiculopathy must be documented. Objective findings on examination need to be present. For unequivocal evidence of radiculopathy, see AMA Guides, 5th Edition, page 382-383. ([Andersson, 2000](#)) Radiculopathy must be 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) and injection of contrast for guidance.
- (4) *Diagnostic Phase*: At the time of initial use of an ESI (formally referred to as the "diagnostic phase" as initial injections indicate whether success will be obtained with this treatment intervention), a maximum of one to two injections should be performed. A repeat block is not recommended if there is inadequate response to the first block (< 30% is a standard placebo response). A second block is also not indicated if the first block is accurately placed unless: (a) there is a question of the pain generator; (b) there was possibility of inaccurate placement; or (c) there is evidence of multilevel pathology. In these cases a different level or approach might be proposed. There should be 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) *Therapeutic phase*: If after the initial block/blocks are given (see "Diagnostic Phase" above) and found to produce pain relief of at least 50-70% pain relief for at least 6-8 weeks, additional blocks may be supported. This is generally referred to as the "therapeutic phase." Indications for repeat blocks include acute exacerbation of pain, or new onset of radicular symptoms. The general consensus recommendation is for no more than 4 blocks per region per year. ([CMS, 2004](#)) ([Boswell, 2007](#))
- (8) Repeat injections should be based on continued objective documented pain relief, decreased need for pain medications, and functional response.
- (9) Current research does not support a routine use of a "series-of-three" injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections for the initial phase and rarely more than 2 for therapeutic treatment.**
- (10) It is currently not recommended to perform epidural blocks on the same day of treatment as facet blocks or sacroiliac blocks or lumbar sympathetic blocks or trigger point injections 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. (Doing both injections on the same day could result in an excessive dose of steroids, which

can be dangerous, and not worth the risk for a treatment that has no long-term benefit.)

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

ACOEM-AMERICA 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)