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Notice of Independent Review Decision

DATE OF REVIEW: 08/26/10

IRO CASE NO.:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:

Item in dispute: INJECTIONS(S), DIAGNOSTIC OR THERAPEUTIC AGENT, PARAVERTEBRAL FACET (ZYGAPOPHYSEAL) JOINT (OR NERVES INNERVATING THAT JOINT) WITH IMAGE GUIDANCE (FLUOROSCOPY OR CT), LUMBAR OR SACRAL; SINGLE LEVEL

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

Texas Board Certified Neurosurgeon

REVIEW OUTCOME

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

Denial Upheld

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW

1. 05/19/10 – Radiographs Lumbar Spine
2. 06/01/10 – MRI Lumbar Spine
3. 06/03/10 – Clinical note, D.O.

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY (SUMMARY):

The employee is a female who sustained an injury on xx/xx/xx when she felt her back pop while doing inventory at work.

Radiographs of the lumbar spine performed 05/19/10 demonstrated mild upper endplate lipping and Schmorl's nodes L2 through L5. There was a minimal S1 segmentation anomaly with rudimentary S1-S2 disc, but not complete lumbarization. There was no focal or acute osseous abnormality.

An MRI of the lumbar spine performed 06/01/10 demonstrated a tiny S1-S2 residual disc noted incidentally. There were minimal small vertebral hemangiomas noted incidentally. At L1-L2, there was a 1 to 2 mm diffuse disc

bulge. 2 mm disc bulges were noted at L2-L3, L3-L4, and L4-L5. There was multilevel disc desiccation. At L5-S1, there was a 3 mm central disc protrusion with mild facet arthropathy.

The employee saw Dr. on 06/03/10. The employee complained of pain in the back and the gluteal region. The employee rated that pain at 8 to 9 out of 10 on the VAS scale. The pain worsened with sitting, standing, and walking. The employee denied bowel or bladder dysfunction. Physical examination revealed a diminished Achilles reflex on the left. Straight leg raise was negative bilaterally. The employee reported significant pain with lumbar extension that improved with lumbar flexion. The employee was assessed with facet arthropathy with acute injury secondary to lifting at work causing stress to the joint. The employee is prescribed Norco, Medrol Dosepak, and Lodine. The employee is recommended for facet injections.

A request for Injections, diagnostic or therapeutic agent paravertebral facet (Zygapophyseal) Joint (or nerves innervating that joint) with image guidance (fluoroscopy or CT) Lumbar or sacral, single level is denied by utilization review on 07/21/10 due to lack of documentation demonstrating an examination consistent with facet joint pain. Also, there was no indication the employee had tried and completed conservative measures including medication management and physical therapy.

The request for Injections, diagnostic or therapeutic agent paravertebral facet (Zygapophyseal) Joint (or nerves innervating that joint) with image guidance (fluoroscopy or CT) Lumbar or sacral, single level was denied by utilization review on 07/27/10 due to lack of documentation demonstrating a positive examination consistent with facet joint pain. There was also no evidence that employee had completed any conservative treatment to include physical therapy.

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

The employee has continuing complaints of low back pain that radiates to the gluteal region. There was pain noted on extension that improves with flexion. Although there appears to be evidence on examination consistent with facet mediated pain, there is insufficient clinical documentation of conservative care. As it is unclear from the clinical documentation if the employee has exhausted the recommended conservative care, the requested facet joint injections for the lumbar spine is not indicated as medically necessary.

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

1. ***Official Disability Guidelines***, Online Version, Low Back Chapters