

April 29, 2021

Laxmaiah Manchikanti, MD, *Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, ASIPP, SIPMS*
LSU Health Sciences Center, Department of Anesthesiology, School of Medicine
2831 Lone Oak Road
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Re: Your inquiry about the UnitedHealthcare commercial and Kentucky-specific coverage policy for Epidural Steroid and Facet Injections for Spinal Pain

Dear Dr. Manchikanti:

Thank you for contacting us about the UnitedHealthcare commercial and Kentucky-specific Epidural Steroid and Facet Injections for Spinal Pain Medical Policy, which include our coverage guidelines for Epidural Steroid Injections (ESI). Since your initial inquiry, our commercial medical policy was revised to version 2021T0004JJ on Jan. 1, 2021, and our Kentucky Policy was revised to version CS308KY.02 on March 1, 2021.

In your email dated Jan. 29, 2021, you shared information on the number of epidural injections for the diagnostic phase, and the therapeutic phase. You also suggested the injections should be expanded to not only lumbar radicular pain with disc herniation or spinal stenosis, but also to post-surgery syndrome and discogenic pain after exclusion of facet joint pain or sacroiliac joint pain.

We appreciate your insights and want to give you some background information.

How we determine coverage

Benefits for members are determined by the provisions of their specific health plan. These guiding standards are for the safety and efficacy of the covered health care services. When we make a coverage decision, we reference the member's specific benefit plan document and UnitedHealthcare medical policy. Medical policy coverage decisions are based on scientifically proven clinical evidence.

In general, UnitedHealthcare defines "unproven services" as those determined to be ineffective for the treatment of the medical condition or not to have beneficial effects on health outcomes, due to insufficient and inadequate clinical evidence from well-conducted, randomized, controlled trials or cohort studies in prevailing, published, peer-reviewed medical literature. These are defined as follows:

- **Well-conducted randomized controlled trials** — 2 or more treatments are compared to each other, and the patient is not allowed to choose which treatment is received
- **Well-conducted cohort studies from more than one Institution.** Patients who receive study treatment are compared to a group of patients who receive standard therapy. The comparison group must be nearly identical to the study treatment group.

Coverage of Epidural Steroid Injections

UnitedHealthcare coverage of ESI is currently under review. Once the review is completed, we'll update our policy information. You can find our most current medical policies at UHCprovider.com/policies.