Epidural Injections for lumbar radiculopathy and/or discogenic pain

| Commissioning decision | The CCG will provide funding for epidural injections for lumbar radiculopathy and/or discogenic pain for patients who meet the criteria defined within this policy. Funding approval for eligible patients must be sought from the CCG via the Prior Approval process prior to treatment. |

**Policy Statement:**

Lumbar interlaminar, transforaminal and caudal epidural injections for adult patients with radicular pain are commissioned when the following criteria are met:

- The patient has radicular pain consistent with the level of spinal involvement, demonstrated through appropriate imaging
  
  **OR**
  
  - There is evidence of nerve-root irritation with a positive nerve-root tension sign (straight leg raise-positive between 30 and 70 degree or positive femoral tension sign)
  
  **AND**
  
  - Symptoms persist despite some non-operative management for at least 6 weeks

Patients may receive up to 3 injections to diagnose and achieve therapeutic effect. If therapeutic effect is achieved (pain reduced by 50% on appropriate pain measure), patient may receive up to 6 injections in total, minimum of 2-3 months apart as part of a comprehensive pain management programme e.g. pain self-management or appropriate level of physiotherapy intervention.

Occasionally, epidural injections may be the only effective management for a cohort of patients. These patients may be considered for prior approval for further epidural injections if they demonstrate sustained benefit (pain reduced by 50% on appropriate pain measure) from the procedure objectively evidenced:

- Must have participated in a comprehensive back pain programme including appropriate psychological intervention and physiotherapy
  
  **AND**
  
  - Must have been reviewed by a clinician specially trained in spinal assessment and must participate in self-directed physiotherapy
  
  **OR**
  
  - Patient cannot tolerate medications and pain is significantly impacting on quality of life and activities of daily living

**Rationale:**

The efficacy of epidural injections for lumbar radiculopathy and/or discogenic pain is unclear, however there is some evidence to suggest that they can be effective in carefully selected patient groups, and when undertaken as part of a multimodal approach.

**Plain English Summary:**

Lumbar radiculopathy (Sciatica) occurs when the sciatic nerve, which runs from your back to
your feet, becomes compressed or irritated. Treatment is not always necessary as the condition often improves naturally within 6 weeks. However, if your symptoms are severe or persistent, a number of treatments are available.

These usually include self-help (including simple pain killers such as paracetamol and increased exercise) and conservative treatments, such as medication and physiotherapy. In some cases it may be appropriate to consider the use of epidural steroid injections to temporarily relieve the pain as part of a complete pain management programme.

If your doctor believes that you meet the criteria set out in this policy they can submit a Prior Approval application to the CCG in order to seek funding approval for your surgery. The CCG will review your case and if we agree that the criteria have been met we will authorise funding.

Evidence base:


Iversen et al. Effect of caudal epidural steroid or saline injection in chronic lumbar radiculopathy: multicentre, blinded, randomised controlled trial, BMJ 2001;343:d5278

Link to application form – Prior Approval Application Form

For further information please contact GLCCG.IFR@nhs.net

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<tr>
<th>Date of publication</th>
<th>12th October 2015</th>
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<td>Policy review date</td>
<td>October 2017</td>
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Consultation

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>MSK Clinical Programme Group</td>
<td>7th July 2015</td>
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<td>GHNHSFT (via CPG)</td>
<td>7th July 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP Membership (via CCG Live/What’s New This Week)</td>
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Has the consultation included patient representatives? Yes (via CPG and ECCP membership)

Policy sign off

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewing Body</th>
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<tr>
<td>Effective Clinical Commissioning Policy Group</td>
<td>3rd August 2015 (virtual)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrated Governance and Quality Committee</td>
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