National Imaging Associates, Inc. (NIA)*
Musculoskeletal Care Management (MSK) Program
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)
For Blue Shield of California (Blue Shield)
Ordering Physicians/Surgeons

Question	Answer
Effective January 1, 2017	
GENERAL	
Why did Blue Shield implement an MSK Program?	The Musculoskeletal Care Management program is designed to improve quality and manage the utilization of non-emergent outpatient interventional spine pain management services, and non-emergent surgeries, occurring in outpatient and inpatient settings. • Musculoskeletal surgeries are a leading cost of health care spending trends • Variations in member care exist across all areas of surgery (care prior to surgery, type of surgery, surgical techniques and tools, and post-op care) • Diagnostic imaging advancements have increased diagnoses and surgical intervention aligning with these diagnoses rather than member symptoms • Medical device companies marketing directly to consumers • Surgeries are occurring too soon leading to the need for additional or revision surgeries <u>The following procedures require prior authorization through NIA:</u> **Outpatient Interventional Spine Pain Management Services:** A separate prior authorization number is required for each procedure ordered. A series of injections will not be approved. Sacroiliac Joint Injections • Spinal Epidural Injections • Paravertebral Facet Joint Injections or Blocks • Paravertebral Facet Joint Denervation (Radiofrequency (RF) Neurolysis) • Epidural Lysis of Adhesion (Racz procedure) • Minimally Invasive Decompression (including MILD) • Percutaneous Thermal Intra- Discal Procedures (Including IDET)

- Prolotherapy
- Sacroplasty
- Percutaneous Lumbar Decompression with Radiofrequency

Outpatient and Inpatient Spine Surgery Services:

- Lumbar Microdiscectomy
- Lumbar Decompression (Laminotomy, Laminectomy, Facetectomy & Foraminotomy)
- Lumbar Fusion (Arthrodesis) With or Without Decompression – Single & Multiple Levels
- Lumbar Artificial Disc Replacement – Single & Multiple Levels
- Cervical Anterior Decompression without Fusion
- Cervical Anterior Decompression with Fusion –Single & Multiple Levels
- Cervical Posterior Decompression without Fusion
- Cervical Posterior Decompression with Fusion –Single & Multiple Levels
- Cervical Artificial Disc Replacement – Single & Two Levels

NIA does not manage prior authorization for emergency MSK surgery cases that are admitted through the emergency room or for MSK surgery procedures outside of those procedures listed.

Why did Blue Shield select NIA to manage its MSK program?	NIA was selected to partner with us because of its clinically driven program designed to effectively manage quality and member safety, while ensuring appropriate utilization of resources for Blue Shield membership.
Which Blue Shield members are covered under this relationship and what networks are used?	NIA manages non-emergent outpatient interventional spine pain management services, outpatient and inpatient spine surgeries for Blue Shield members. NIA uses the Blue Shield network of Pain Management Physicians, Surgeons, Hospitals, Surgery Centers, and In-Office Providers as its preferred providers for delivering Outpatient Interventional Spine Pain Management Services and select Inpatient and Outpatient Surgeries to Blue Shield members.
PRIOR AUTHORIZATION	
When is prior authorization required?	Prior authorization is required through NIA for outpatient interventional spine pain management services, and inpatient and outpatient non-emergent emergent spine surgeries listed.

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	• Facility admissions do not require a separate prior authorization. However, the facility should ensure that an NIA prior authorization has been obtained prior to scheduling the surgery.
Is a prior authorization required for members who already have a musculoskeletal surgery scheduled?	Yes. Any non-emergent outpatient interventional spine pain management services and select inpatient and outpatient spine surgery requires a prior authorization through NIA.
Who can order a musculoskeletal surgery?	Musculoskeletal surgeries requiring medical necessity review are expected to be ordered by one of the following specialties: • Orthopedic Surgeons • Neurosurgeons
Are pain management procedures included in this program?	Yes. All non-emergent outpatient interventional spine pain management procedures are required to have a prior authorization through NIA.
Who will be reviewing the surgery requests and medical information provided?	As a part of the NIA clinical review process, actively practicing, orthopedic surgeon specialists or neurosurgeons will conduct the medical necessity reviews and determinations of musculoskeletal surgery cases.
Does the NIA's prior authorization process change the requirements for facility-related prior authorization?	NIA's medical necessity review and determination is for the authorization of the surgeon's professional services and type of surgery being performed.
How does the ordering physician obtain a prior authorization from NIA?	Ordering Physicians will be able to request prior authorization via the NIA website https://www.RadMD.com or by calling the NIA toll-free number 1-888-642-2583.
What information does NIA require in order to receive prior authorization?	To expedite the process, please have the following information ready before logging on to the website or calling the NIA call center at 1-888-642-2583 for prior authorization of non-emergent outpatient interventional spine pain management or non-emergent inpatient and outpatient spine surgeries: (*denotes required information) • Name and office phone number of ordering physician* • Member name and ID number* • Requested surgery type* • CPT Codes • Name of facility where the surgery will be performed* • Anticipated date of surgery*

	- Details justifying the surgical procedure*: - Clinical Diagnosis* - Date of onset of back pain or symptoms /Length of time member has had episode of pain* - Physician exam findings (including findings applicable to the requested services) - Diagnostic imaging results - Non-operative treatment modalities completed, date, duration of pain relief, and results (e.g., physical therapy, epidural injections, chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation, hot pads, massage, ice packs and medication) Please be prepared to provide the following information, if requested: - Clinical notes outlining type and onset of symptoms - Length of time with pain/symptoms - Non-operative care modalities to treat pain and amount of pain relief - Physical exam findings - Diagnostic Imaging results - Specialist reports/evaluation
Does the ordering physician need a separate request for all spine procedures being performed during the same surgery on the same date of service?	No. NIA will provide a list of surgery categories to choose from and the Blue Shield surgeon <u>must</u> select the most complex and invasive surgery being performed as the primary surgery. **Example: Lumbar Fusion** - If the Blue Shield surgeon is planning a single level Lumbar Spine Fusion with decompression, the surgeon will select the single level fusion procedure. The surgeon <u>does not need</u> to request a separate authorization for the decompression procedure being performed as part of the Lumbar Fusion Surgery. This is included in the Lumbar Fusion request. **Example: Laminectomy** - If the Blue Shield surgeon is planning a Laminectomy with a Microdiscectomy, the surgeon will select the Lumbar decompression procedure. The surgeon <u>does not need </u>to request a separate authorization for the Microdiscectomy procedure. If the Blue Shield surgeon is only performing a Microdiscectomy (CPT 63030 or 63035), the surgeon should select the Microdiscectomy only procedure.

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Will the ordering physician need to enter each CPT procedure code being performed for a spine surgery?	No. NIA will provide a list of surgery categories to choose from and the ordering physician must select the primary surgery (most invasive) being performed. There will be a summary of which CPT codes fall under each procedure category.
Are instrumentation (medical device), bone grafts, and bone marrow aspiration included as part of the spine or joint fusion authorizations?	Yes. The instrumentation (medical device), bone grafts, and bone marrow aspiration procedures commonly performed in conjunction with musculoskeletal surgeries are included in the authorization; however, the amount of instrumentation must align with the procedure authorized.
What kind of response time can an ordering physician expect for prior authorization?	Having the following information available prior to calling NIA at 1-888-642-2583 or online through https://www.RadMD.com will create the most efficient turnaround time of a medically necessity decision. • Clinical Diagnosis • Date of onset of back pain or symptoms /Length of time member has had episode of pain • Physician exam findings (including findings applicable to the requested services) • Pain/Member Symptoms • Diagnostic imaging results • Non-operative treatment modalities completed, date, duration of pain relief, and results (e.g., physical therapy, epidural injections, chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation, hot pads, massage, ice packs and medication) Generally, within 2 business days after receipt of request with full clinical documentation, a determination will be made. In certain cases, the review process can take longer if additional clinical information is required to make a determination.
What does the NIA authorization number look like?	The NIA authorization number will consist of alpha-numeric characters. In some cases, the ordering surgeon may instead receive an NIA tracking number (not the same as an authorization number) if the surgeon's authorization request is not approved at the time of initial contact. Ordering physicians will be able to use either number to track the status of their request online or through an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) telephone system.
If requesting authorization through RadMD and the	You will receive a tracking number and NIA will contact you to complete the process.

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request pends, what happens next?	
Can RadMD be used to request retrospective or expedited authorization request?	No, those requests will need to be called into NIA's call center for processing at 1-888-642-2583.
How long is the prior authorization number valid?	Authorization numbers are valid for 180 days from the date of request.
Is prior authorization necessary for interventional spine pain management services, lumbar, or cervical surgery if Blue Shield is NOT the member's primary insurance?	Yes.
If an ordering physician obtains a prior authorization number does that guarantee payment?	An authorization number is not a guarantee of payment. Authorizations are based on medical necessity and are contingent upon eligibility and benefits. Benefits may be subject to limitations and/or qualifications and will be determined when the claim is received for processing. NIA's medical necessity review and determination is for the authorization of the surgeon's professional services and type of surgery being performed.
Does NIA allow retro-authorizations?	Yes. It is important that key physicians and office staff be educated on the prior authorization requirements. Claims for interventional spine pain management services or spine surgeries, as outlined above that have <u>not</u> been properly authorized will <u>not</u> be reimbursed. Physicians performing interventional spine pain management services or spine surgeries <u>should not</u> schedule or perform these surgeries without prior authorization.
Can an ordering physician verify an authorization number online?	Yes. Ordering physicians can check the status of member authorization quickly and easily by going to the website at https://www.RadMD.com.
Will the NIA authorization number	No.

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be displayed on the Blue Shield website?	
What if I disagree with NIA's determination?	In the event of a prior authorization or claims payment denial, providers may appeal the decision through Blue Shield. Providers should follow the instructions on their non-authorization letter or Explanation of Payment (EOP) notification.
SCHEDULING PROCEDURES	
Do ordering physicians have to obtain an authorization before they call to schedule an appointment?	NIA asks where the surgery is being performed and the anticipated date of service. Ordering physicians should obtain prior authorization before scheduling the member and the facility or hospital admission.
WHICH MEDICAL SURGEONS ARE AFFECTED?	

Which physicians are impacted by the MSK Program?	Neurosurgeons and Orthopedic Surgeons are the key physicians impacted by this program.
	
	All procedures performed in any setting are included in this program:
	    • Hospital (Inpatient & Outpatient Settings)
	    • Ambulatory Surgical Centers

CLAIMS RELATED	
Where do rendering providers/surgeons send their claims for inpatient and outpatient, non-emergent MSK services?	Blue Shield rendering providers/surgeons should continue to send claims directly to Blue Shield. Rendering providers/surgeons are encouraged to use EDI claims submission.
How can claims status be checked?	Rendering providers/surgeons should check claims status via Blue Shield's website at https://www.blueshieldca.com/provider or by calling Blue Shield's Provider Services Department at 1-800-541-6652.
Who should providers contact if they want to appeal a prior authorization or claims payment denial?	Rendering providers/physicians/surgeons are asked to please follow the appeal instructions given on their non-authorization letter or Explanation of Benefits (EOB) notification.
MISCELLANEOUS	
How is medical necessity defined?	NIA defines medical necessity as services that: • Meets generally accepted standards of medical practice; be appropriate for the symptoms, consistent with diagnosis, and

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	otherwise in accordance with sufficient evidence and professionally recognized standards;
	• Be appropriate to the illness or injury for which it is performed as to type of service and expected outcome;
	• Be appropriate to the intensity of service and level of setting;
	• Provide unique, essential, and appropriate information when used for diagnostic purposes;
	• Be the lowest cost alternative that effectively addresses and treats the medical problem; and rendered for the treatment or diagnosis of an injury or illness; and
	• Not furnished primarily for the convenience of the member, the attending physician, or other surgeon.
How do referring/ordering surgeons know who NIA is?	Blue Shield sends notification letters and educational materials to plan surgeons.
Where can an ordering physician find NIA's Guidelines for Clinical Use of MSK Procedures?	NIA's Clinical Guidelines can be found on the website at https://www.RadMD.com. They are presented in a PDF file format that can easily be printed for future reference. NIA's clinical guidelines have been developed from practice experiences, literature reviews, specialty criteria sets and empirical data.
Does the Blue Shield member ID card have NIA information?	No. The Blue Shield member ID card does not contain any NIA information on it.
RECONSIDERATION AND APPEALS PROCESS	
Is the reconsideration process available for the MSK program once a denial is received?	Once a denial determination has been made, if the office has new or additional information to provide, a reconsideration can be initiated by uploading via RadMD or faxing (using the case specific fax cover sheet) additional clinical information to support the request. A reconsideration is allowed for an unlimited timeframe and prior to submitting a formal appeal. NIA has specialized clinical teams focused on interventional spine pain management and spine surgeries. Peer-to-peer discussions are offered for any request that does not meet medical necessity guidelines. The MSK provider may call 1-888-642-2583 to initiate the peer-to-peer process. These discussions provide an opportunity to discuss the case and collaborate on the appropriate services for the member based on the clinical information provided.
RADMD ACCESS	
If I currently have RadMD access, will I	If the user already has access to RadMD, RadMD will allow you to submit an authorization for any procedures managed by NIA.

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need to apply for additional access to initiate authorizations for MSK procedures?	
What option should I select to receive access to initiate authorizations?	Selecting "**Physician's office that orders procedures**" will allow you access to initiate authorizations for MSK procedures.
How do I apply for RadMD access to initiate authorization requests if I don't have access?	User would go to our website https://www.RadMD.com. • Click on NEW USER. • Choose "**Physician's office that orders procedures**" from the drop-down box • Complete application with necessary information. • Click on Submit Once an application is submitted, the user will receive an email from our RadMD support team within a few hours after completing the application with an approved username and a temporary passcode. Please contact the RadMD Support Team at 1-800-327-0641 if you do not receive a response within 72 hours.
What is rendering provider access?	Rendering provider access allows users the ability to view all approved authorizations for their office or facility. If an office is interested in signing up for rendering access, you will need to **designate an administrator.** • User would go to our website https://www.RadMD.com • Select "Facility/Office where procedures are performed" • Complete application • Click on Submit Examples of a rendering facility that only need to view approved authorizations: • Hospital facility • Billing department • Offsite location Another user in location who is not interested in initiating authorizations
Which link on RadMD will I select to initiate an authorization request for MSK procedures?	Clicking the "**Request Pain Management or Minimally Invasive Procedure**" link will allow the user to submit a request for an interventional spine pain management procedure. Clicking the "**Request Spine Surgery or Orthopedic Surgery**" link will allow the user to submit a request for an surgery procedure.
How can providers check the status of an	Providers can check on the status of an authorization by using the "View Request Status" link on RadMD's main menu.

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authorization request?	
How can I confirm what clinical information has been uploaded or faxed to NIA?	Clinical Information that has been received via upload or fax can be viewed by selecting the member on the View Request Status link from the main menu. On the bottom of the "Request Verification Detail" page, select the appropriate link for the upload or fax.
Where can providers find their case-specific communication from NIA?	Links to case-specific communication to include requests for additional information and determination letters can be found via the View Request Status link.
If I did not submit the initial authorization request, how can I view the status of a case or upload clinical documentation?	The "Track an Authorization" feature will allow users who did not submit the original request to view the status of an authorization, as well as upload clinical information. This option is also available as a part of your main menu options using the "Search by Tracking Number" feature. A tracking number is required with this feature.
Paperless Notification: How can I receive notifications electronically instead of paper?	NIA defaults communications including final authorization determinations to paperless/electronic. Correspondence for each case is sent to the email of the person submitting the initial authorization request. Users will be sent an email when determinations are made. • No PHI will be contained in the email. • The email will contain a link that requires the user to log into RadMD to view PHI. Providers who prefer paper communication will be given the option to opt out and receive communications via fax.
CONTACT INFORMATION	
Who can I contact if we need RadMD support?	For assistance, please contact: RadMDSupport@Evolent.com or call 1-800-327-0641. RadMD is available 24/7, except when maintenance is performed every third Thursday of the month from 9 pm – midnight PST.
Who can I contact for provider education requests or questions specific to NIA?	Providers can contact Debbie Patterson, Provider Relations Manager, at 1-314-387-4799 or DPatterson@evolent.com.

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