

Case Number:	CM14-0010883		
Date Assigned:	02/21/2014	Date of Injury:	07/06/2009
Decision Date:	08/04/2014	UR Denial Date:	12/27/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/27/2014

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Orthopedic Surgery and is licensed to practice in California. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The expert reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

This is a 58-year-old male with a 7/6/09 date of injury. He is a plant laborer who slipped on a rock and fell backwards on his back, twisting his right knee during a fall. On 4/26/13, the patient is noted to be 5'6" and 175 pounds. Bilateral knee radiographs on 4/26/13 showed severe bilateral knee bone-on-bone osteoarthritis. On 2/19/14, the patient complained of bilateral knee pain. An objective exam was not documented. A UR decision provided on 3/21/13 shows that a right total knee arthroplasty was certified. A QME dated 9/13/13 recommended bilateral staged total knee replacements. The patient has decreased knee flexion of 90 degrees in left knee and 100 in right knee. He has decreased extension at 170 on left and 175 in right. Both knees are slightly swollen but not warm. He has an antalgic gait. An EMG/NCS dated 9/25/133 showed chronic left L5 radiculopathy. Diagnostic Impression: Severe Bilateral Knee Degenerative joint disease, Lumbar Disc Disease with Radiculopathy, and Varicosities/Thrombophlebitis. Treatment to date: cortisone injections to the knees, medication management, activity modification. A UR decision dated 12/27/13 denied the request for bilateral total knee replacements due to lack of information.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

STAGED BILATERAL TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENTS: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 13 Knee Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Knee Arthroplasty.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Knee Chapter: Knee Arthroplasty.

Decision rationale: CA MTUS does not address this issue. (ODG) Official Disability Guidelines criteria for TKR include conservative care including Visco supplementation injections OR Steroid injection, limited range of motion, nighttime joint pain, and no pain relief with conservative care; over 50 years of age and Body Mass Index of less than 35; and osteoarthritis on imaging or arthroscopy report. This patient has been recommended by his orthopedic surgeon, as well as a recent Qualified Medical Evaluator (QME) in September of 2013, for bilateral staged total knee replacements. He sustained an initial meniscal injury to both knees, but due to the chronic degenerative disease, was not recommended for surgery. He continues to have chronic pain that is interfering with his functional ability and activities of daily living. He has failed extensive conservative management, including cortisone injections, medication management, and activity modification. In fact, it was noted that his surgeon prefers he not receive any more cortisone injections due to possibility of damage from the multiple injections he has already received. He does have radiographs of the bilateral knees documented to show severe bone-on-bone degenerative disease. He is 57-years-old and his BMI is calculated to be 28.2. Therefore, the request for Staged Bilateral Total Knee Replacements was medically necessary.