

Case Number:	CM14-0122538		
Date Assigned:	08/05/2014	Date of Injury:	11/10/2013
Decision Date:	08/11/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/25/2014
Priority:	Expedited	Application Received:	08/04/2014

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 Occupational Medicine 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:

The applicant is a represented [REDACTED] employee who has filed a claim for ankle pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of November 10, 2013. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; one prior ankle corticosteroid injection; an ankle brace; and five sessions of physical therapy. On February 24, 2014, the applicant did receive corticosteroid injections of the lateral malleolus. On March 24, 2014, the attending provider wrote that the earlier corticosteroid injection had generated "no improvement." The applicant was given Naprosyn and Voltaren gel. On May 19, 2014, the applicant was referred to orthopedics for a second opinion. On April 7, 2014, the applicant was temporarily placed off of work and given a diagnosis of neuritis and tendonitis of the ankle. A June 2, 2014 progress note indicated that the applicant had persistent complaints of ankle pain. The applicant was having difficulty working regular duty. An MRI imaging of the ankle demonstrated fibrosis and edema. A mildly positive Tinel sign was noted with tenderness noted about the anterior talofibular ligament. Work restrictions were endorsed. The ultrasound-guided corticosteroid injection was endorsed through a handwritten progress note of July 8, 2014. In a Utilization Review Report dated July 20, 2014, the claims administrator denied a request for an ultrasound-guided ankle injection, stating that a previous corticosteroid injection of February 24, 2014 resulted in little-to-no improvement. Non-MTUS Guidelines endorsing ultrasound-guided injections were cited. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Ultrasound Guided Right Ankle Injection: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 14 Ankle and Foot Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG Pain Injections with anesthetics and/or steroids; as well as The National Center for Biotechnology Information's PubMed Database (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation UpToDate.com, Musculoskeletal Ultrasonography: Guided injection and aspiration of joints and related structures.

Decision rationale: The California MTUS Guidelines do not address the topic of ultrasound ankle injections. As noted in the literature review conducted by UpToDate.com, direct ultrasound visualization during needle placement may be of particular use for the injection or aspiration of various joints, including the ankle. Ultrasound guidance can improve the accuracy and efficacy of therapeutic injections and/or aspirations of joints. In this case, the applicant's treating provider, a podiatrist, did perform one earlier blind corticosteroid injection. This was unsuccessful. Pain complaints did persist. The applicant has been deemed a non-operative candidate, based on the information on file. The applicant is still having difficulty performing standing and walking tasks, and has seemingly failed to tolerate regular duty work. A trial, first-time ultrasound-guided right ankle injection is therefore indicated. Accordingly, the request is medically necessary.