

Case Number:	CM14-0151098		
Date Assigned:	09/19/2014	Date of Injury:	05/03/2007
Decision Date:	10/20/2014	UR Denial Date:	08/18/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/16/2014

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 Anesthesia; has a subspecialty in Acupuncture & Pain 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:

62y/o male injured worker with date of injury 5/3/07 with related bilateral knee pain. Per progress report dated 8/7/14, there was diffuse tenderness, no effusion, and slight contracture noted of the bilateral knees. The injured worker did have varus alignment and there was tenderness medially. The injured worker had lost about 12lbs since the last visit and had been trying a bicycle, but this caused some hamstring discomfort recently. The provider recommended a series of three Synvisc injections in each knee over a three-week period using ultrasound guidance. Since the injured worker was still morbidly obese, knee replacement was not a good option at the time. Treatment to date has included physical therapy, injections, braces, and medication management. The date of UR decision was 8/18/14.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Synvisc injection x 3 with ultrasound guidance bilateral knees: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 13 Knee Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Knee & Leg (updated 6/5/14), Hyaluronic acid injections

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Knee & Leg, Hyaluronic Acid Injections

Decision rationale: The MTUS is silent on the use of hyaluronic acid injections. Per ODG TWC with regard to viscosupplementation, hyaluronic acid injections are "Recommended as a possible option for severe osteoarthritis for patients who have not responded adequately to recommended conservative treatments (exercise, NSAIDs or acetaminophen), to potentially delay total knee replacement, but in recent quality studies the magnitude of improvement appears modest at best. While osteoarthritis of the knee is a recommended indication, there is insufficient evidence for other conditions, including patellofemoral arthritis, chondromalacia patellae, osteochondritis dissecans, or patellofemoral syndrome (patellar knee pain)." Criteria for Hyaluronic acid injections:- Patients experience significantly symptomatic osteoarthritis but have not responded adequately to recommended conservative nonpharmacologic (e.g., exercise) and pharmacologic treatments or are intolerant of these therapies (e.g., gastrointestinal problems related to anti-inflammatory medications), after at least 3 months;- Documented symptomatic severe osteoarthritis of the knee, which may include the following: Bony enlargement; Bony tenderness; Crepitus (noisy, grating sound) on active motion; Less than 30 minutes of morning stiffness; No palpable warmth of synovium; Over 50 years of age.- Pain interferes with functional activities (e.g., ambulation, prolonged standing) and not attributed to other forms of joint disease;- Failure to adequately respond to aspiration and injection of intra-articular steroids;- Generally performed without fluoroscopic or ultrasound guidance;- Are not currently candidates for total knee replacement or who have failed previous knee surgery for their arthritis, unless younger patients wanting to delay total knee replacement. (Wen, 2000)- Repeat series of injections: If documented significant improvement in symptoms for 6 months or more, and symptoms recur, may be reasonable to do another series. No maximum established by high quality scientific evidence; see Repeat series of injections above.- Hyaluronic acid injections are not recommended for any other indications such as chondromalacia patellae, facet joint arthropathy, osteochondritis dissecans, or patellofemoral arthritis, patellofemoral syndrome (patellar knee pain), plantar nerve entrapment syndrome, or for use in joints other than the knee (e.g., ankle, carpo-metacarpal joint, elbow, hip, metatarso-phalangeal joint, shoulder, and temporomandibular joint) because the effectiveness of hyaluronic acid injections for these indications has not been established. The documentation submitted for review indicates that the injured worker has previously received Synvisc injection to the left knee with 6-9 months of relief. It is noted that these injections took place years ago. I respectfully disagree with the UR physician's denial based on the lack of availability of medical records immediately following the previous procedure. The documentation submitted is adequate to support medical necessity. The request is medically necessary.