

Case Number:	CM14-0038044		
Date Assigned:	06/25/2014	Date of Injury:	01/30/1997
Decision Date:	07/29/2014	UR Denial Date:	03/25/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/01/2014

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 represented [REDACTED] employee who filed a claim for knee and leg arthritis reportedly associated with an industrial injury of January 30, 1997. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with analgesic medications; a knee x-ray of December 5, 2011, notable for advanced arthritis; earlier knee arthroscopy in 1997; and two sets of Synvisc injections, per the claims administrator. In a utilization review report dated March 25, 2014, the claims administrator denied a request for Synvisc injections, citing the ODG Guidelines. The claims administrator posited that the applicant had not demonstrated significant improvement with earlier Synvisc or Euflexxa injections. In a progress note dated August 15, 2013, the applicant was described as having a long-standing history of knee arthritis. On September 4, 2013, the applicant was described as having had a good response to earlier Synvisc (Euflexxa) injections. In an earlier note of August 15, 2013, it was again stated that the applicant had advanced knee arthritis which had proven recalcitrant to steroid injections and that the applicant was therefore a candidate for Euflexxa (Synvisc) injections. It appears that repeat Euflexxa injections were endorsed via request for authorization from dated March 19, 2014. It did not appear that the applicant had presented for an office visit on that date, however. In a later note on December 4, 2013, the applicant was described as having advanced spinal stenosis. In a letter dated June 29, 2014, the applicant stated that she was active as a licensed aviation pilot. The applicant stated that she was walking her dog, performing home exercises, gardening, hiking, cooking gourmet meals, and traveling. The applicant stated that the previous Euflexxa (Synvisc) injections had allowed her to live pain free for six to eight months and that she was therefore intent on pursuing the same and was apparently intent on resuming her work/hobby as a pilot.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 Euflexxa injection kit X3 to the left knee: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Knee & Leg (Acute & Chronic) Hyaluronic Acid Injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Non-MTUS ACOEM Practice Guidelines, 3rd Edition, Chapter 13: Knee Complaints, Injection Section.

Decision rationale: The MTUS does not address the topic. As noted in the third edition of the ACOEM Guidelines viscosupplementation injections topic, intra-articular viscosupplementation (Euflexxa) injections are recommended for the treatment of moderate-to-severe knee arthritis. In this case, the applicant apparently has radiographically confirmed, clinically evident severe knee arthritis which has apparently responded favorably to earlier viscosupplementation (Euflexxa) injections. The applicant did apparently resume her work/hobby as a pilot. The applicant did maintain an active lifestyle apparently free of regular analgesic medication usage. The applicant was described on an office visit of December 4, 2013 as using only over-the-counter NSAIDs as of that point in time. Thus, all evidence on file points to the applicant having demonstrated substantial functional improvement in terms of the parameters established in the MTUS through previous sets of Euflexxa (viscosupplementation) injections. Therefore, the request for set of repeat Euflexxa (viscosupplementation) injections is medically necessary.