MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM14-0065965		
Date Assigned:	07/11/2014	Date of Injury:	08/08/2010
Decision Date:	09/08/2014	UR Denial Date:	04/24/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/09/2014

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 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation has a subspecialty in Interventional Spine 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 patient is a 38-year-old male with a date of injury of 08/08/2010. The listed diagnosis per [redacted] is knee arthritis confirmed by x-ray changes with mild limitation of range of motion and joint effusion. According to progress report 04/14/2014, the patient is status post arthroscopic partial medial meniscectomy of the left knee on 01/03/2014. The left knee is progressing well, but the right knee continues to be symptomatic. X-rays of the right knee identified degenerative changes, traumatic, with grade IV chondromalacia medial joint compartment, loss of articular cartilage, and varus deformity. The patient continues with the unloader brace and antiinflammatory medications without substantial improvement of the right knee. X-ray of the knee revealed 1-mm joint space interval on the patient's right knee with 3 mm joint space interval on the right side with lateral joint interval 5 mm. The patient has mild varus of the knee. Examination revealed swelling and tenderness upon the right knee. Treater states the patient has failed conservative care, and he is suggesting Synvisc injection x1 for the right knee. Utilization review denied the request on 04/24/2014.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Synvisc Injection of right Knee x 1: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Page(s): viscosupplementation injections. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Viscosupplementation of Knee-AAOS guidelines 2013.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines ODG guidelines on Synvisc for knee.

Decision rationale: This patient is status post left knee surgery on 01/03/2014 and is progressing well. The patient's right knee continues to be symptomatic. The right knee shows degenerative changes, traumatic, with grade IV chondromalacia medial joint compartment, loss of articular cartilage and varus deformity. Treater states patient has failed conservative measurements and is requesting a Synvisc injection of the right knee x1. Utilization review denied the request stating there is a "lack of positive clinically important outcomes data relative to viscosupplementation, and the patient's exercise regimen and attempts at weight loss have not been documented." The MTUS Guidelines do not discuss hyaluronic acid knee injections. Therefore, return to ODG for further discussion. ODG recommends "hyaluronic acid injection as a possible option for severe osteoarthritis who have not responded adequately to recommend a conservative treatments including exercise, NSAIDs, or acetaminophen to potentially delay total knee replacements or who have failed the previous knee surgery for arthritis, but in recent quality studies, the magnitude of improvement appears modest." In this case, the patient's right knee shows degenerative changes grade IV chondromalacia medial compartment with loss of articular cartilage with varus deformity. X-ray also confirms 3-mm joint space interval on the right side. Given such, a Synvisc injection to the right knee is reasonable and recommendation is for approval.