

Case Number:	CM15-0009379		
Date Assigned:	01/27/2015	Date of Injury:	07/23/2011
Decision Date:	03/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/06/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/15/2015

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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:
 State(s) of Licensure: New Jersey, Michigan, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular Medicine

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 injured worker is a 25 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 7/23/2011. The current diagnoses are chronic right knee pain, left knee pain, and status post meniscus repair (10/2011), arthroscopy with debridement and bone grafting (8/14/2013), and arthroscopic ligament repair (3/6/2014). Currently, the injured worker complains of persistent bilateral knee pain. She is awaiting authorization for arthroscopic surgery of the right knee. The pain is rated 4-5/10 with medications and 9/10 without. Current medications are Norco, Prozac, Omeprazole, Ibuprofen, and Amitriptyline. Treatment to date has included medications, knee brace, physical therapy, home exercises, and surgery. The treating physician is requesting post-operative crutches for the right knee times 6 weeks, which is now under review. On 1/6/2015, Utilization Review had non-certified a request for post-operative crutches for the right knee times 6 weeks. The Official Disability Guidelines were cited.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Post-operative Crutches, Right knee for 6 weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Treatment Index, 11th edition, 2014, Walking Aids

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Walking aids (canes, crutches, braces, orthoses, & walkers)

Decision rationale: According to ODG guidelines, Walking aids (canes, crutches, braces, orthoses, & walkers) (canes, crutches, braces, orthoses, & walkers) Recommended, as indicated below. Almost half of patients with knee pain possess a walking aid. Disability, pain, and age-related impairments seem to determine the need for a walking aid. Nonuse is associated with less need, negative outcome, and negative evaluation of the walking aid. (Van der Esch, 2003) There is evidence that a brace has additional beneficial effect for knee osteoarthritis compared with medical treatment alone, a laterally wedged insole (orthosis) decreases NSAID intake compared with a neutral insole, patient compliance is better in the laterally wedged insole compared with a neutral insole, and a strapped insole has more adverse effects than a lateral wedge insole. (Brouwer-Cochrane, 2005) Contralateral cane placement is the most efficacious for persons with knee osteoarthritis. In fact, no cane use may be preferable to ipsilateral cane usage as the latter resulted in the highest knee moments of force, a situation which may exacerbate pain and deformity. (Chan, 2005) While recommended for therapeutic use, braces are not necessarily recommended for prevention of injury. (Yang, 2005) Bracing after anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction is expensive and is not proven to prevent injuries or influence outcomes. (McDevitt, 2004) Recommended, as indicated below. Assistive devices for ambulation can reduce pain associated with OA. Frames or wheeled walkers are preferable for patients with bilateral disease. (Zhang, 2008) While foot orthoses are superior to flat inserts for patellofemoral pain, they are similar to physical therapy and do not improve outcomes when added to physical therapy in the short-term management of patellofemoral pain. (Collins, 2008) In patients with OA, the use of a cane or walking stick in the hand contralateral to the symptomatic knee reduces the peak knee adduction moment by 10%. Patients must be careful not to use their cane in the hand on the same side as the symptomatic leg, as this technique can actually increase the knee adduction moment. Using a cane in the hand contralateral to the symptomatic knee might shift the body's center of mass towards the affected limb, thereby reducing the medially directed ground reaction force, in a similar way as that achieved with the lateral trunk lean strategy described above. Cane use, in conjunction with a slow walking speed, lowers the ground reaction force, and decreases the biomechanical load experienced by the lower limb. The use of a cane and walking slowly could be simple and effective intervention strategies for patients with OA. In a similar manner to which cane use unloads the limb, weight loss also decreases load in the limb to a certain extent and should be considered as a long-term strategy, especially for overweight individuals. (Reeves, 2011) See also U-Step walker. The patient developed left knee meniscal disease and there is no controlled studies supporting the benefit of knee brace in meniscal disease, osteoarthritis and anterior cruciate ligament disorders. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.