

Case Number:	CM15-0107872		
Date Assigned:	06/12/2015	Date of Injury:	04/11/1994
Decision Date:	07/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/06/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/04/2015

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: Texas, New York, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational 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 applicant is a represented 62-year-old who has filed a claim for chronic knee pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of April 11, 1994. In a Utilization Review report dated May 6, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for viscosupplementation injections to the left knee. The claims administrator referenced an April 29, 2015 progress note and associated RFA in its determination. Overall rationale underpinning the denial was sparse. The claims administrator invoked non-MTUS ODG Guidelines in its denial and mislabeled the same as originating from the MTUS. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. In a handwritten prescription dated April 20, 2015, a series of three Orthovisc (viscosupplementation) injections were endorsed. In an associated progress note of the same date, April 20, 2015, the applicant reported ongoing complaints of pain and swelling about the bilateral knees, left greater than right. X-rays of the left knee apparently demonstrated a patellofemoral osteophyte formation, increased medial joint space narrowing, and some lateral joint space narrowing. The applicant had apparently undergone a right knee total knee arthroplasty, it was suggested. Viscosupplementation injection therapy and Norco were sought. It was not clearly stated what treatment or treatments had transpired to date. The applicant's past medical history was likewise not detailed.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Viscosupplementation injection series of 3 to the left knee: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG).

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ACOEM Occupational Medicine Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed., Knee Disorders, pg 687.

Decision rationale: Yes, the proposed viscosupplementation (Orthovisc) injections were medically necessary, medically appropriate, and indicated here. The MTUS does not address the topic. However, the Third Edition ACOEM Guidelines Knee Chapter does note that intraarticular knee viscosupplementation injections are recommended in the treatment of moderate to severe knee osteoarthritis, particularly that which is unsatisfactorily controlled with NSAIDs, Tylenol, weight loss, or other exercise strategies. ACOEM also notes that viscosupplementation injections are particularly beneficial in applicants age 60 to 75. Here, the applicant had seemingly failed conservative treatment with time, medications, observation, etc., the treating provider reported. The applicant did have radiographic evidence of advanced knee arthritis; it was suggested on the date in question, April 20, 2015. The applicant was 62 years old and, thus, likely a good candidate for the procedure in question. It appeared, based on the attending provider's description of events, that the applicant was intent on deferring any kind of surgical intervention involving the left knee following an earlier right knee total knee arthroplasty surgery. Moving forward with the proposed Orthovisc (viscosupplementation) injections was, thus, indicated. Therefore, the request was medically necessary.