

Case Number:	CM15-0138117		
Date Assigned:	07/29/2015	Date of Injury:	01/11/2007
Decision Date:	08/31/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/17/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 71-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 1/11/2007. Diagnoses have included knee pain and osteoarthritis (degenerative joint disease) of knee. Treatment to date has included Visco-supplementation and medication. According to the progress report dated 6/26/2015, the injured worker complained of bilateral knee pain, right worse than left. She also complained of knee stiffness. The injured worker received a Visco-supplementation series into both knees with the last injections in July 2014. After the last series of Visco-supplementation, she had a significant decrease in her pain for 12 months and she had more flexibility. Exam of the knees showed trace effusion. There was tenderness to palpation at the lateral joint line. Crepitus was present with range of motion testing. Authorization was requested for Orthovisc injections to both knees.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

8 Orthovisc injections to the bilateral 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 (ODG), Knee and Leg, Criteria for Hyaluronic acid or Hylan.

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 (Acute & Chronic)' Chapter under Hyaluronic Acid injections.

Decision rationale: The 71 year old patient complains of pain in bilateral knees, right more than knee, along with stiffness, as per progress report dated 06/26/15. The request is for 8 ORTHOVISC INJECTIONS TO BILATERAL KNEES. There is no RFA for this case, and the patient's date of injury is 01/11/07. Diagnoses, as per progress report dated 04/22/15, included pain in the knee and osteoarthritis (DJD) of the knee. The patient is status post lumbar laminectomy in 2007 and 2009, and status post arthroscopy in 2009 and 2010. Current medications included Celebrex, Celecoxib, Gabapentin, Synthroid, Digoxin, and baby aspirin. The patient is retired, as per progress report dated 06/26/15. MTUS is silent on Synvisc injections. ODG guidelines, chapter 'Knee & Leg (Acute & Chronic)' state 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." ODG further states that This study assessing the efficacy of intra-articular injections of hyaluronic acid (HA) compared to placebo in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee found that results were similar and were not statistically significant between treatment groups, but HA was somewhat superior to placebo in improving knee pain and function, with no difference between 3 or 6 consecutive injections. Regarding ultrasound guidance, however, ODG guidelines do not support it unless it is a difficult injection; there is morbid obesity or draining popliteal cyst. The guidelines also state that "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." In this case, the patient has been diagnosed with osteoarthritis of bilateral knees, as per progress report dated 04/22/15. As per the same report, "The last series of Vasculosupplementation material on the right decreased pain and improved ROM." The treater states that the impact of the injections lasted for about 8 months but the patient's knees are hurting again. Given the documentation of significant improvement for more than six months, as required by ODG, the repeat injections appear reasonable and the request IS medically necessary.