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| Case Number: | CM15-0197366 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 10/12/2015 | Date of Injury: | 02/28/2010 |
| Decision Date: | 11/30/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 09/22/2015 |
| Priority: | Standard | Application Received: | 10/07/2015 |

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 [REDACTED] beneficiary who has filed a claim for chronic bilateral knee pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of February 28, 2010. In a Utilization Review report dated September 22, 2015, the claims administrator failed to approve a request for Euflexxa (viscosupplementation injection) involving the left and right knees. The claims administrator referenced a September 11, 2015 date of service in its determination. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. On June 19, 2015, the claimant was described as having ongoing complaints of bilateral knee osteoarthritis status post bilateral knee corticosteroid injections. The claimant had undergone left and right knee arthroscopy procedures, it was reported. The claimant was described as struggling with anterior knee pain complaints. The claimant was asked to pursue repeat viscosupplementation injections. The claimant was asked to continue working in the interim. The attending provider suggested pursuit of MR arthrography of the knees to evaluate the progression of cartilaginous loss. On July 31, 2015, the claimant was described as having ongoing complaints of knee pain with associated popping and occasional instability. Knee MR arthrographies of July 2015 were notable for early arthritic changes. The claimant was asked to consider repeat cortisone and/or viscosupplementation injections at a later point, the treating provider stated. On September 11, 2015, the claimant again reported ongoing complaints of bilateral knee and low back pain. The claimant was asked to pursue chiropractic manipulative therapy, a lumbar support, and a heating pad while returning to regular duty work. On an RFA form dated September 15, 2015, the claimant was asked to pursue bilateral knee viscosupplementation injection (Euflexxa) injections

for a diagnosis of early osteoarthritis status post arthroscopy-chondroplasty. On an associated progress note dated September 11, 2015, the claimant was again asked to pursue repeat viscosupplementation injections status post earlier viscosupplementation injections in November 2014 and status post earlier knee corticosteroid injections in April 2015. The claimant was asked to return to work in the interim while employing Mobic and Vicodin for pain relief.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Right Knee Euflexxa Injections QTY: 3: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG Online Hyaluronic Acid Injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Knee Complaints 2004, Section(s): Initial Care. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ACOEM Occupational Medicine Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed., Knee Disorders, pg. 687. Recommendation: Intra-articular Knee Viscosupplementation Injections for Moderate to Severe Knee Osteoarthritis, Intra-articular knee viscosupplementation injections are recommended for treatment of moderate to severe knee osteoarthritis, Indications - Knee pain from osteoarthritis that is unsatisfactorily controlled with NSAIDs, acetaminophen, weight loss, or exercise strategies.

Decision rationale: No, the request for three (3) right knee Euflexxa (viscosupplementation) injections was not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. As noted in the MTUS Guideline in ACOEM Chapter 13, page 339, invasive techniques such as the viscosupplementation (Euflexxa) injections at issue are deemed not routinely indicated. While the Third Edition ACOEM Guidelines Knee Disorders Chapter acknowledge that viscosupplementation (Euflexxa) injections are recommended in the treatment of moderate-to-severe knee osteoarthritis, here, however, the applicant was described as carrying a diagnosis of early knee arthritis, the treating provider reported on a progress note and associated RFA form of September 11, 2015. It was not clearly stated or clearly established why Euflexxa (viscosupplementation) injection therapy was sought in the clinical context present here, particularly in light of the fact that the applicant had received multiple such injections in both 2014 and 2015 and in the face of the seemingly unfavorable ACOEM position(s) on further viscosupplementation injections in the clinical context present here. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.

Left Knee Euflexxa Injections QTY: 3: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ODG Online Hyaluronic Acid Injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Knee Complaints 2004, Section(s): Initial Care. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ACOEM Occupational Medicine Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed., Knee Disorders, pg. 687. Recommendation: Intra-articular Knee Viscosupplementation Injections for Moderate to Severe Knee Osteoarthritis, Intra-articular

knee viscosupplementation injections are recommended for treatment of moderate to severe knee osteoarthritis, Indications - Knee pain from osteoarthritis that is unsatisfactorily controlled with NSAIDs, acetaminophen, weight loss, or exercise strategies.

Decision rationale: Similarly, the request for three (3) left knee Euflexxa (viscosupplementation) injections was likewise not medically necessary, medically appropriate, or indicated here. As noted in the MTUS Guideline in ACOEM Chapter 13, page 339, invasive techniques such as the injection(s) are not routinely indicated. Here, however, the attending provider failed to furnish a clear or compelling rationale for left knee viscosupplementation injection therapy so soon after the applicant had received injections in November 2014 and April 2015 in his September 11, 2015 progress note. While the Third Edition ACOEM Guidelines Knee Disorders Chapter acknowledges that viscosupplementation (Euflexxa) injections are recommended in the treatment of moderate-to-severe knee osteoarthritis, here, however, the September 11, 2015 office visit and earlier progress notes suggested that the applicant carried a diagnosis of early knee arthritis, i.e., a condition for which viscosupplementation injection therapy is not explicitly recommended, per ACOEM. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.