MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0201934		
Date Assigned:	10/16/2015	Date of Injury:	04/15/2000
Decision Date:	12/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/14/2015

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, Oregon, Washington
Certification(s)/Specialty: Orthopedic Surgery

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 64-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 4-15-2000 and has been treated for left knee patellofemoral osteoarthritis, and low back pain. Diagnostic MRI noted medial meniscus degeneration and chondromalacia patella. On 5-28-2015 the injured worker reported left knee pain as frequent, aching, and aggravated by walking and bending. Objective findings not provided. Documented treatment includes "failed" corticosteroid injection, Synvisc injection on 5-21-2015 with temporary relief, at least three sessions of physical therapy, Meloxicam, and Tylenol No. 3 with 60 percent improvement. The treating physician's plan of care includes a series of three Euflexxa injections for the left knee which was non-certified on 9-18-2015. There is no documentation of this treatment being tried in the past. Current work status is retired.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Euflexxa injection series 1 times 3 for the left knee: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Knee & Leg Chapter Hyaluronic acid injections.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Knee and leg chapter, Hyaluronic acid injection.

Decision rationale: CA MTUS/ACOEM is silent regarding the request for viscosupplementation for the knee. According to the ODG Knee and leg chapter, Hyaluronic acid injection, it is indicated for patients with documented severe osteoarthritis of the knee and patients who have failed 3 months of conservative non-pharmacologic (e.g. exercise) and pharmacologic treatments or are intolerant of these therapies. As there is no documentation of failed conservative therapy and radiographic documentation of severe osteoarthritis in the exam note from 5/28/15, the determination is for non-certification. ODG criteria states: Criteria for Hyaluronic acid injections: Patients experience significantly symptomatic osteoarthritis but have not responded adequately to recommended conservative non-pharmacologic (e.g., exercise) and pharmacologic treatments or are intolerant of these therapies (e.g., gastrointestinal problems related to anti-inflammatory medications), after at least 3 months; Documented symptomatic severe osteoarthritis of the knee, which may include the following: Bony enlargement; Bony tenderness; Crepitus (noisy, grating sound) on active motion; Less than 30 minutes of morning stiffness; No palpable warmth of synovium; Over 50 years of age. Pain interferes with functional activities (e.g., ambulation, prolonged standing) and not attributed to other forms of joint disease; Failure to adequately respond to aspiration and injection of intra-articular steroids; Generally performed without fluoroscopic or ultrasound guidance; Are not currently candidates for total knee replacement or who have failed previous knee surgery for their arthritis, unless younger patients wanting to delay total knee replacement. (Wen, 2000) 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; see Repeat series of injections above. Hyaluronic acid injections are not recommended for any other indications such as chondromalacia patellae, facet joint arthropathy, osteochondritis dissecans, or patellofemoral arthritis, patellofemoral syndrome (patellar knee pain), plantar nerve entrapment syndrome, or for use in joints other than the knee (e.g., ankle, carpo-metacarpal joint, elbow, hip, metatarso-phalangeal joint, shoulder, and temporomandibular joint) because the effectiveness of hyaluronic acid injections for these indications has not been established. In this case the patient has a diagnosis of chondromalacia patellae and thus does not meet ODG criteria for viscosupplementation. The request is not medically necessary.