

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0222714		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	11/18/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	09/15/1985
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/30/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/28/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	11/12/2015

### 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:

This 58 year old female sustained an industrial injury on 3-15-13. Documentation indicated that the injured worker was receiving treatment for back, neck, bilateral upper extremity, bilateral ankles and bilateral knee pain as well as psyche complaints, sleep disorder, fibromyalgia and Sjogren's syndrome. The injured worker was not a candidate for bilateral total knee replacements due to a history of pulmonary emboli. Recent treatment consisted of injections and medications. In a PR-2 dated 8-12-15, the injured worker complained of ongoing bilateral knee pain, rated 3 to 4 out of 10 on the visual analog scale. The injured worker noted improvement to mechanical symptoms following recent 40-pound weight loss after bariatric surgery. The injured worker deferred Synvisc injections at that time. In a PR-2 dated 10-1-15, the injured worker complained of continuing pain and weakness to bilateral knees with decreased range of motion with weight bearing that made performing activities of daily living difficult. The injured worker's pain was not quantified. Physical exam was remarkable for tenderness to palpation to the medial and lateral joint lines and the patellofemoral joint, positive crepitus, patellofemoral compression and grind and "decreased" range of motion. The injured worker used a cane for ambulation. The physician documented that bilateral knee magnetic resonance imaging (9-25-13) showed moderate tricompartmental osteoarthritis with effusion and chondromalacia. The treatment plan included requesting authorization for bilateral knee Synvisc injections. On 10-28-15, Utilization Review noncertified a request for bilateral knee Synvisc injections, 3 injections per knee.

## IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

### **Bilateral Knee Synvisc Injections, 3 Injections per Knee (6 ML/48 MG Total): 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).

**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 10/1/15, the request is not medically necessary. 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.