

Case Number:	CM15-0112379		
Date Assigned:	06/18/2015	Date of Injury:	02/10/2015
Decision Date:	07/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/10/2015

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: Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina
Certification(s)/Specialty: Plastic 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 42 year old man sustained an industrial injury on 2/10/2015. The mechanism of injury is not detailed. Evaluations include left hand MRI dated 3/20/2015, right hand MRI dated 5/20/2015, and bilateral hand x-rays dated 2/10/2015. Diagnoses include left gamekeeper's thumb. Treatment has included oral medications, physical therapy, and use of a thumb spica splint. Physician notes on a PR-2 dated 5/22/2015 show complaints of left thumb pain despite wearing a brace one to two hours per day. Recommendations include surgical intervention.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Associated surgical service: Assistant surgeon Qty: 1.00: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Book Chapter, Basic Surgical Technique and Postoperative Care. David L. Cannon Campbell's Operative Orthopaedics, Page Number: Chapter 64, 3200-3220.

Decision rationale: The patient is a 42 year old male who was certified for repair of the MCP ulnar collateral ligament of the left thumb. A request for an assistant was made. The request for an assistant was denied stating that medical necessity was not demonstrated based on the nature of the procedure. The repair of the ulnar collateral ligament of the thumb can be a complex repair that requires meticulous dissection and possible reconstruction if primary repair cannot be performed. This possible complexity necessitates an assistant for adequate exposure, retraction and possible assistance with complex reconstruction. Therefore, this service should be considered medically necessary. ODG and ACOEM do not provide adequate guidelines for an assistant for this type of case. From the above reference with respect to hand surgery, the role of the assistant surgeon is defined: "Seated opposite the surgeon, the assistant should view the operative field from 8 to 10 cm higher than the surgeon to allow a clear line of vision without having to bend forward and obstruct the surgeon's view. Although mechanical hand holders are available, they are not as good as a motivated and well-trained assistant. It is especially helpful for the assistant to be familiar with each procedure. Usually, the primary duty of the assistant is to hold the patient's hand stable, secure, and motionless, retracting the fingers to provide the surgeon with the best access to the operative field." Thus, the role and importance of an assistant surgeon is well-defined and should be considered medically necessary. Repair of the ulnar collateral ligament of the thumb can be a complicated surgical correction. Thus, an assistant can help to prevent this and is medically necessary.