

Case Number:	CM15-0115086		
Date Assigned:	06/23/2015	Date of Injury:	03/08/2014
Decision Date:	07/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/04/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/15/2015

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: New Jersey, Alabama, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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 injured worker is a 48 year old male who sustained a work related injury March 8, 2014. He slipped between two decks, with injury to the left leg and knee. He was treated with medication and twelve session of physical therapy and x-rays and an MRI were performed. An MRI arthrogram, dated March 6, 2015 (report present in the medical record), revealed no evidence of internal derangement or patellar tendon tear. An MRI of the left knee, dated April 28, 2015 (report present in the medical record), revealed mild grade interstitial tearing at the origin of the patellar tendon, stable since the previous exam, May 14, 2014. According to a physician's progress notes, dated May 6, 2015, the injured worker presented with complaints of continued pain in the left knee and reporting he has not had physical therapy since his last visit. Physical examination revealed; 5'8" 220 pounds range of motion left knee 0 degrees extension and 130 degrees flexion, and medial joint line tenderness to palpation. Impression is documented as left knee chronic insertional patellar tendinitis; left lateral tibial plateau bone edema. Treatment plan included physical therapy and at issue, a request for authorization for an ultrasound guided PRP (platelet rich plasma) injection.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Outpatient ultrasound-guided platelet rich plasma injection for the left patella tendon:
 Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 13 Knee Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines -Knee and Leg.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Platelet-rich plasma (PRP), <http://www.worklossdatainstitute.verioiponly.com/odgtwc/elbow.htm#Plateletrichplasma>.

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) is "Recommend single injection as a second-line therapy for chronic lateral epicondylitis after first-line physical therapy such as eccentric loading, stretching and strengthening exercises, based on recent research below. This small pilot study found that 15 patients with chronic elbow tendinosis treated with buffered platelet-rich plasma (PRP) showed an 81% improvement in their visual analog pain scores after six months, and concluded that PRP should be considered before surgical intervention. Further evaluation of this novel treatment is warranted. (Mishra, 2006) This review concluded that there is strong pilot-level evidence supporting the use of prolotherapy, polidocanol, autologous whole blood and platelet-rich plasma injections in the treatment of lateral epicondylitis (LE). Rigorous studies of sufficient sample size, assessing these injection therapies using validated clinical, radiological and biomechanical measures, and tissue injury/healing-responsive biomarkers, are needed to determine long-term effectiveness and safety, and whether these techniques can play a definitive role in the management of LE and other tendinopathies. (Rabago, 2009) Using a Gravitational platelet separation system, whole blood can yield platelet-rich plasma. Specially prepared platelets taken from the patient are then re-injected into the tendon of the affected elbow. Platelet-rich plasma contains powerful growth factors that initiate healing in the tendon, but may also send signals to other cells in the body drawing them to the injured area to help in repair. Treatment with PRP is still considered investigational and further research is needed before it can be made available to the general population. According to the author, "The body has an extraordinary ability to heal itself. All we did was speed the process by taking blood from a different area, concentrating it, and putting it back into an area where there was relatively poor blood supply to help repair the damage." Early studies have shown PRP therapy may be useful in maxillofacial surgery, wound healing, microfracture repair, and in the treatment of plantar fasciitis. PRP looks promising, but it is not yet ready for prime time. PRP has become popular among professional athletes because it promises to enhance performance, but there is no science behind it yet. PRP was better than corticosteroid injections in relieving pain and improving function in patients with chronic severe lateral epicondylitis, but the study concluded that PRP should be reserved for the most severe cases since 80% of tennis elbows will be cured spontaneously without doing anything within a year. (AAOS, 2010)" There is no clear and recent documentation of failure of first line therapies for managing the pain. There are no controlled studies supporting the benefit and safety for PRP for severe arthritis. Therefore, the request for ultrasound-guided platelet rich plasma injection for the left patella tendon is not medically necessary.