

Case Number:	CM15-0143698		
Date Assigned:	08/04/2015	Date of Injury:	01/28/2013
Decision Date:	10/27/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/30/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/24/2015

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, District of Columbia, Maryland
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

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 59 year old man sustained an industrial injury on 1-28-2013. The mechanism of injury is not detailed. Diagnoses include right knee surgery. Treatment has included oral medications, stretching, heat, cold, activity modification, home exercise program, surgical intervention, and physical therapy. Physician notes dated 12-18-2014 show complaints of continuous severe right knee pain rated 8 out of 10. The physical examination shows right knee tenderness to the medial and lateral joint line, crepitance with range of motion, and a decrease in in spasms of the calf muscle. Recommendations include a series of three viscosupplementation injections to the right knee, continue a healthy activity level, continue home exercise program, continue TENS unit therapy, Tramadol ER, and Naproxen. Utilization Review originally denied a request for viscosupplementation of the left knee in error as a request was made for the right knee to be injected. After several months of appealing and attempting to clarify this decision, a new request was filed and decision granted. Utilization Review denied a request for Orthovisc injections series citing there is no documentation of failed Cortisone injection or imaging supporting a diagnosis of osteoarthritis.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Orthovisc injections x 3 right 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 and Leg.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Knee & Leg, Hyaluronic Acid Injections.

Decision rationale: The MTUS is silent on the use of hyaluronic acid injections. Per ODG TWC with regard to viscosupplementation, hyaluronic acid injections are "Recommended as a possible option for severe osteoarthritis for patients who have not responded adequately to recommended conservative treatments (exercise, NSAIDs or acetaminophen), to potentially delay total knee replacement, but in recent quality studies the magnitude of improvement appears modest at best. While osteoarthritis of the knee is a recommended indication, there is insufficient evidence for other conditions, including patellofemoral arthritis, chondromalacia patellae, osteochondritis dissecans, or patellofemoral syndrome (patellar knee pain)." 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. The documentation submitted for review does not contain any recent diagnostic reports showing degenerative changes or evidence of severe osteoarthritis. Furthermore, there was no evidence that the injured worker had undergone injection of intra-articular steroids. As the criteria is not met, the request is not medically necessary.