

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 03-2681V

Filed: May 21, 2013

Not to be Published

SUSAN DUNN, parent of *
SHERIDAN DUNN, a minor, *

Petitioner, *

v. *

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND *
HUMAN SERVICES *

Respondent. *

Autism; Dismissal; Insufficient Proof of
Causation; Attorneys' Fees and Costs

DECISION DISMISSING PETITION AND AWARDING ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS¹

On November 17, 2003, petitioner filed the Short-Form Petition authorized by Autism General Order #1,² thereby joining the Omnibus Autism Proceeding ("OAP").³

¹ Because this unpublished decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, I intend to post this decision on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website, in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-347, § 205, 116 Stat. 2899, 2913 (codified as amended at 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2006)). In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), a party has 14 days to identify and move to delete medical or other information, that satisfies the criteria in 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-12(d)(4)(B). Further, consistent with the rule requirement, a motion for redaction must include a proposed redacted decision. If, upon review, I agree that the identified material fits within the requirements of that provision, I will delete such material from public access.

² Autism General Order #1 adopted the Master Autism Petition for Vaccine Compensation for use by petitioners filing claims intended to be part of the OAP. By electing to file a Short-Form Autism Petition for Vaccine Compensation petitioners alleged that:

Petitioner alleges that Sheridan was injured by a vaccine or vaccines listed on the Vaccine Injury Table. The information in the record does not show entitlement to an award under the Program.

On May 20, 2013, the petitioner moved for a decision on the merits of the petition, acknowledging that insufficient evidence exists to demonstrate entitlement to compensation.

To receive compensation under the Program, petitioner must prove either 1) that Sheridan suffered a “Table Injury” – i.e., an injury falling within the Vaccine Injury Table – corresponding to one of Sheridan’s vaccinations, or 2) that Sheridan suffered an injury that was actually caused by a vaccine. See §§ 13(a)(1)(A) and 11(c)(1). Examination of the record does not disclose any evidence that Sheridan suffered a “Table Injury.” Further, the record does not contain a medical expert’s opinion or any other persuasive evidence indicating that Sheridan’s alleged injury was vaccine-caused.

Under the Vaccine Act, a petitioner may not be awarded compensation based on the petitioner’s claims alone. Rather, the petition must be supported by either the medical records or by a medical opinion. § 13 (a)(1). In this case, the record does not contain medical records or a medical opinion sufficient to demonstrate that the vaccinee was injured by a vaccine. For these reasons, in accordance with § 12(d)(3)(A), the **petitioner’s claim for compensation is DENIED and this case is dismissed for insufficient proof.**

The petitioner has also filed an unopposed motion for an award of attorneys’ fees and costs in this case. Petitioner is entitled to reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs pursuant to §§ 15(b) and (e)(1). Respondent has reviewed the motion and does not object. Petitioner seeks attorneys’ fees and costs in the amount of \$ 3,730.00 for Conway, Homer & Chin-Caplan, P.C. In lieu of filing a Vaccine General Order 9

[a]s a direct result of one or more vaccinations covered under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, the vaccinee in question has developed a neurodevelopmental disorder, consisting of an Autism Spectrum Disorder or a similar disorder. This disorder was caused by a measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccination; by the “thimerosal” ingredient in certain Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTP), Diphtheria-Tetanus-acellular Pertussis (DTaP), Hepatitis B, and Hemophilus Influenza Type B(HIB) vaccinations; or by some combination of the two

Autism General Order # 1 filed July 3, 2002, Exhibit A, Master Autism Petition for Vaccine Compensation at 2.

³ A detailed discussion of the OAP can be found at Dwyer v. Sec’y of Health & Human Servs., No. 03-1202V, 2010 WL 892250, at *3 (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Mar. 12, 2010).

statement, pursuant to the stipulation the firm agrees to reimburse petitioner any costs that petitioner personally incurred that are compensable under § 15 (e)(1).

The request for attorneys' fees and costs is GRANTED. Petitioner is awarded reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to §§ 15(b) and (e)(1), as I find that the petition was brought in good faith and upon a reasonable basis, and the amounts requested are reasonable and appropriate.

Pursuant to §15(e), I award a lump sum of \$3,730.00⁴ to be paid in the form of a check payable jointly to the petitioner and petitioner's counsel, Conway, Homer & Chin-Caplan, P.C.

In the absence of a timely-filed motion for review filed pursuant to Appendix B of the Rules of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, the Clerk of the court shall enter judgment in accordance herewith.⁵

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Patricia E. Campbell-Smith
Patricia E. Campbell-Smith
Chief Special Master

⁴ This amount is intended to cover all legal expenses incurred in this matter. This award encompasses all charges by the attorney against a client, "advanced costs" as well as fees for legal services rendered. Furthermore, § 15(e)(3) prevents an attorney from charging or collecting fees (including costs) that would be in addition to the amount awarded herein. See generally Beck v. Sec'y of Dep't Health & Human Servs., 924 F.2d 1029 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

⁵ Entry of judgment can be expedited by each party's filing of a notice renouncing the right to seek review. See Vaccine Rule 11(a).