

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 12-664V

Filed: September 4, 2013

Not for Publication

SUSIE GONZALEZ,

*

*

Petitioner,

*

Damages decision based on stipulation;
influenza vaccine; bilateral optic neuritis

*

v.

*

*

SECRETARY OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES,

*

*

*

Respondent.

*

*

Sean F. Greenwood, Houston, TX, for petitioner.

Ryan D. Pyles, Washington, DC, for respondent.

MILLMAN, Special Master

DECISION AWARDING DAMAGES¹

On September 3, 2013, the parties filed the attached stipulation in which they agreed to settle this case and described the settlement terms. Petitioner alleges that she suffered bilateral optic neuritis resulting in permanent legal blindness that was caused by her September 30, 2009 receipt of trivalent influenza vaccine. Petitioner further alleges that she suffered the residual effects of this injury for more than six months. Respondent denies that petitioner's alleged optic neuritis, or any other injury, was caused by influenza vaccine. Nonetheless, the parties agreed to resolve this matter informally.

¹ Because this unpublished decision contains a reasoned explanation for the special master's action in this case, the special master intends to post this unpublished decision on the United States Court of Federal Claims's website, in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-347, 116 Stat. 2899, 2913 (Dec. 17, 2002). Vaccine Rule 18(b) states that all decisions of the special masters will be made available to the public unless they contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged and confidential, or medical or similar information whose disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy. When such a decision is filed, petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to delete such information prior to the document's disclosure. If the special master, upon review, agrees that the identified material fits within the banned categories listed above, the special master shall delete such material from public access.

The undersigned finds the terms of the stipulation to be reasonable. The court hereby adopts the parties' said stipulation, attached hereto, and awards compensation in the amount and on the terms set forth therein. Pursuant to the stipulation, the court awards:

- a. a lump sum of **\$8,708.00**, representing reimbursement of a State of Texas Medicaid lien. The award shall be in the form of a check for **\$8,708.00** made payable jointly to petitioner and

Superior Health Plan
5615 High Point Dr., Ste. 100
Irving, TX 75038
ATTN: Connie Kendall/Case #110986.

Petitioner agrees to endorse this payment to the State; and

- b. a lump sum of **\$16,463.46**, representing reimbursement of a second State of Texas Medicaid lien. The award shall be in the form of a check for **\$16,463.46**, made payable jointly to petitioner and

Optum
P.O. Box 13216
Green Bay, WI 54307-3216
ATTN: Terri Waligursky/Case #8505095.

Petitioner agrees to endorse this payment to the State; and

- c. a lump sum of **\$533,000.00**, representing compensation for all remaining damages that would be available under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a). The award shall be in the form of a check for **\$533,000.00** made payable to petitioner.

In the absence of a motion for review filed pursuant to RCFC Appendix B, the clerk of the court is directed to enter judgment herewith.²

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: September 4, 2013

s/ Laura D. Millman
Laura D. Millman
Special Master

² Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), entry of judgment can be expedited by each party, either separately or jointly, filing a notice renouncing the right to seek review.

**IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS**

SUSIE GONZALEZ,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

No. 12-664V

Special Master Laura D. Millman

ECF

STIPULATION

The parties hereby stipulate to the following matters:

1. Susie Gonzalez ("petitioner") filed a petition for vaccine compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-10 to 34 (the "Vaccine Program"). The petition seeks compensation for injuries allegedly related to petitioner's receipt of the trivalent influenza ("flu") vaccine, which vaccine is contained in the Vaccine Injury Table (the "Table"), 42 C.F.R. § 100.3(a).
2. Petitioner received a flu vaccine on or about September 30, 2009.
3. The vaccine was administered within the United States.
4. Petitioner alleges that the flu vaccine caused her to develop bilateral optic neuritis resulting in permanent legal blindness and that she experienced residual effects of this injury for more than six months.
5. Petitioner represents that there has been no prior award or settlement of a civil action for damages as a result of her condition.

6. Respondent denies that the flu immunization is the cause of petitioner's alleged optic neuritis and/or any other injury.

7. Maintaining their above-stated positions, the parties nevertheless now agree that the issues between them shall be settled and that a decision should be entered awarding the compensation described in paragraph 8 of this Stipulation.

8. As soon as practicable after an entry of judgment reflecting a decision consistent with the terms of this Stipulation, and after petitioner has filed an election to receive compensation pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-21(a)(1), the Secretary of Health and Human Services will issue the following vaccine compensation payments:

- a. A lump sum of **\$8,708.00**, which amount represents reimbursement of a State of Texas Medicaid lien, in the form of a check payable jointly to petitioner and

Superior Health Plan
5615 High Point Dr., Ste. 100
Irving, TX 75038
ATTN: Connie Kendall/Case # 110986.

Petitioner agrees to endorse this payment to the State;

- b. A lump sum of **\$16,463.46**, which amount represents reimbursement of a second State of Texas Medicaid lien, in the form of a check payable jointly to petitioner and

Optum
P.O. Box 13216
Green Bay, WI 54307-3216
ATTN: Terri Waligursky/Case # 8505095.

Petitioner agrees to endorse this payment to the State; and

- c. A lump sum of **\$533,000.00** in the form of a check payable to petitioner. This amount represents all remaining compensation for damages that would be available under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a).

9. As soon as practicable after the entry of judgment on entitlement in this case, and after petitioner has filed both a proper and timely election to receive compensation pursuant to 42

U.S.C. § 300aa-21(a)(1), and an application, the parties will submit to further proceedings before the special master to award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred in proceeding upon this petition.

10. Petitioner and her attorney represent that they have identified to respondent all known sources of payment for items or services for which the Program is not primarily liable under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(g), including State compensation programs, insurance policies, Federal or State health benefits programs (other than Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 1396 et seq.)), or entities that provide health services on a pre-paid basis.

11. Payments made pursuant to paragraph 8 and any amounts awarded pursuant to paragraph 9 of this Stipulation will be made in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(i), subject to the availability of sufficient statutory funds.

12. The parties and their attorneys further agree and stipulate that, except for any award for attorneys' fees and litigation costs, and past unreimbursable expenses, the money provided pursuant to this Stipulation will be used solely for the benefit of petitioner as contemplated by a strict construction of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a) and (d), and subject to the conditions of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(g) and (h).

13. In return for the payments described in paragraphs 8 and 9, petitioner, in her individual capacity and on behalf of her heirs, executors, administrators, successors and/or assigns, does forever irrevocably and unconditionally release, acquit and discharge the United States and the Secretary of Health and Human Services from any and all actions or causes of action (including agreements, judgments, claims, damages, loss of services, expenses and all demands of whatever kind or nature) that have been brought, could have been brought, or could be timely brought in the Court of Federal Claims, under the National Vaccine Injury

Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-10 et seq., on account of, or in any way growing out of, any and all known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected personal injuries to or death of petitioner resulting from, or alleged to have resulted from, the flu vaccination administered on or about September 30, 2009, as alleged by petitioner in a petition for vaccine compensation filed on or about October 3, 2012, in the United States Court of Federal Claims as petition No. 12-664V.

14. If petitioner should die prior to entry of judgment, this agreement shall be voidable upon proper notice to the Court on behalf of either or both of the parties.

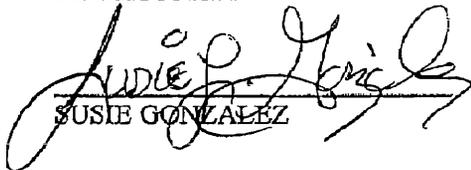
15. If the special master fails to issue a decision in complete conformity with the terms of this Stipulation or if the Court of Federal Claims fails to enter judgment in conformity with a decision that is in complete conformity with the terms of this Stipulation, then the parties' settlement and this Stipulation shall be voidable at the sole discretion of either party.

16. This Stipulation expresses a full and complete negotiated settlement of liability and damages claimed under the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, as amended, except as otherwise noted in paragraph 9 above. There is absolutely no agreement on the part of the parties hereto to make any payment or to do any act or thing other than is herein expressly stated and clearly agreed to. The parties further agree and understand that the award described in this Stipulation may reflect a compromise of the parties' respective positions as to liability and/or amount of damages, and further, that a change in the nature of the injury or condition or in the items of compensation sought, is not grounds to modify or revise this agreement.

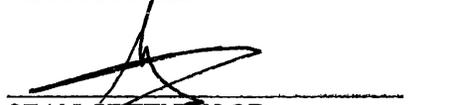
17. This Stipulation shall not be construed as an admission by the United States or the Secretary of Health and Human Services that the flu vaccine caused petitioner's alleged optic neuritis, and/or any other injury.

Respectfully submitted,

PETITIONER:


SUSIE GONZALEZ

**ATTORNEY OF RECORD FOR
PETITIONER:**


SEAN GREENWOOD
GAUTHIER HOUGHTALING & WILLIAMS
2323 South Shepherd Dr., Ste. 800
Houston, TX 77019
(713) 343-1614

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:**


VINCENT J. MATANOSKI
Deputy Director
Torts Branch
Civil Division
U.S. Department of Justice
P.O. Box 146
Benjamin Franklin Station
Washington, DC 20044-0146

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES:**


VITO CASERYA, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Director, Division of
Vaccine Injury Compensation (DVIC);
Director, Countermeasures Injury
Compensation Program (CICP)
Healthcare Systems Bureau
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane
Parklawn Building, Mail Stop 11C-26
Rockville, MD 20857

**ATTORNEY OF RECORD FOR
RESPONDENT:**


RYAN D. PYLES
Trial Attorney
Torts Branch
Civil Division
U.S. Department of Justice
P.O. Box 146
Benjamin Franklin Station
Washington, DC 20044-0146
(202) 616-9847

DATED: September 3, 2013