

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 08-0912V

Filed: January 22, 2013

Not to be Published

**JOSEPH AMABILE and
MICHELLE AMABILE,
on behalf of their minor child,**

Petitioners,

v.

**SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES**

Respondent.

**Autism; Failure to Prosecute; Failure
to Follow Court Orders; Dismissal**

DECISION¹

On December 22, 2008, petitioners filed a Petition for Vaccine Compensation in the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (“the Program”),² alleging that their minor child was injured by a vaccine or vaccines listed on the Vaccine Injury Table. See § 14.

On November 2, 2012,³ petitioners were ordered to amend the caption to include

¹ Because this unpublished decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, I intend to post this decision on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website, in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), petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to delete medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, I agree that the identified material fits within this definition, I will delete such material from public access.

² The Program comprises Part 2 of the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755, codified as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-10 *et seq.* (hereinafter “Vaccine Act” or “the Act”). Hereafter, individual section references will be to 42 U.S.C. § 300aa of the Act.

³ The order was initially filed on October 4, 2012 but mistakenly was sent to petitioners at their old address: 318 Meachum Avenue, Park Ridge, IL 60068. The order was returned as

their child's initials, to file a written causation statement, and to file all medical records if they intended to proceed with their claim. Petitioners did not respond to that order. On December 11, 2012, petitioners were again ordered⁴ to amend the caption to include their child's initials, to file a written causation statement, and to file all medical records or otherwise show cause within thirty days, why this case should not be dismissed for failure to prosecute. Petitioners failed to respond to that order as well.

I. The Omnibus Autism Proceeding

This case is one of more than 5,400 cases filed under the Program in which petitioners alleged that conditions known as "autism" or "autism spectrum disorders" ["ASD"] were caused by one or more vaccinations. A detailed history of the controversy regarding vaccines and autism, along with a history of the development of the OAP, was set forth in the six entitlement decisions issued by three special masters as "test cases" for two theories of causation litigated in the OAP and will not be repeated here.⁵

Ultimately, the Petitioners' Steering Committee ["PSC"], an organization formed by attorneys representing petitioners in the OAP, litigated six test cases presenting two different theories on the causation of ASDs. The first theory alleged that the measles portion of the measles, mumps, rubella vaccine could cause ASDs. That theory was presented in three separate Program test cases during several weeks of trial in 2007. The second theory alleged that the mercury contained in thimerosal-containing vaccines could directly affect an infant's brain, thereby substantially contributing to the causation of ASD. That theory was presented in three additional test cases during several weeks of trial in 2008.

Decisions in each of the three test cases pertaining to the PSC's first theory rejected the petitioners' causation theories. *Cedillo*, 2009 WL 331968, *aff'd*, 89 Fed. Cl. 158 (2009), *aff'd*, 617 F.3d 1328 (Fed. Cir. 2010); *Hazlehurst*, 2009 WL 332306, *aff'd*, 88 Fed. Cl. 473 (2009), *aff'd*, 604 F.3d 1343 (Fed. Cir. 2010); *Snyder*, 2009 WL 332044, *aff'd*, 88 Fed. Cl. 706 (2009).⁶ Decisions in each of the three "test cases" pertaining to the PSC's second theory also rejected the petitioners' causation theories, and

undeliverable. A second order was filed November 2, 2012 and sent to petitioners at their new address: 929 Aldine, Park Ridge, IL 60068.

⁴ The Order to Show Cause was sent to petitioners by both regular and certified mail at their address or record: 929 Aldine, Park Ridge, IL 60068.

⁵ The Theory 1 cases are *Cedillo v. Sec'y, HHS*, No. 98-916V, 2009 WL 331968 (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Feb. 12, 2009); *Hazlehurst v. Sec'y, HHS*, No. 03-654V, 2009 WL 332306 (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Feb. 12, 2009); *Snyder v. Sec'y, HHS*, No. 01-162V, 2009 WL 332044 (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Feb. 12, 2009). The Theory 2 cases are *Dwyer v. Sec'y, HHS*, No. 03-1202V, 2010 WL 892250 (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Mar. 12, 2010); *King v. Sec'y, HHS*, No. 03-584V, 2010 WL 892296 (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Mar. 12, 2010); *Mead v. Sec'y, HHS*, No. 03-215V, 2010 WL 892248 (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Mar. 12, 2010).

⁶ Petitioners in *Snyder* did not appeal the decision of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

petitioners in each of the three cases chose not to appeal. *Dwyer*, 2010 WL 892250; *King*, 2010 WL 892296; *Mead*, 2010 WL 892248. Thus, the proceedings in these six test cases are concluded. Petitioners remaining in the OAP must now decide whether to pursue their cases, and submit new evidence on causation, or take other action to exit the Program. The petitioners in this case have failed to inform the court how they intend to proceed.

II. Failure to Prosecute

It is petitioners' duty to respond to court orders. Failure to respond to a court order because the petitioners have failed to stay in contact with their attorney is deemed noncompliance with a court order, and noncompliance will not be tolerated. As I reminded petitioners in my December 11, 2012, order, failure to follow court orders, as well as failure to file medical records or an expert medical opinion, shall result in dismissal of petitioners' claim. *Tsekouras v. Sec'y, HHS*, 26 Cl. Ct. 439 (1992), *aff'd per curiam*, 991 F.2d 810 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *Sapharas v. Sec'y, HHS*, 35 Fed. Cl. 503 (1996); Vaccine Rule 21(b).

III. Causation In Fact

To receive compensation under the Program, petitioners must prove either 1) that their minor child suffered a "Table Injury" – i.e., an injury falling within the Vaccine Injury Table – corresponding to one of their minor child's vaccinations, or 2) that their minor child suffered an injury that was actually caused by a vaccine. See §§ 13(a)(1)(A) and 11(c)(1). Under the Vaccine Act, a special master cannot find a petitioner has proven her case by a preponderance of the evidence based upon "the claims of a petitioner alone, unsubstantiated by medical records or by medical opinion." § 13(a). Petitioners have failed to file sufficient medical records and evidence in this case. Thus, an examination of the record did not uncover any evidence that their minor child suffered a "Table Injury." Further, the record does not contain a medical opinion or any other persuasive evidence indicating that their minor child's autism spectrum disorder was vaccine-caused.

Accordingly, it is clear from the record in this case that petitioners have failed to demonstrate either that their minor child suffered a "Table Injury" or that their minor child's injuries were "actually caused" by a vaccination. **This case is dismissed for insufficient proof and for failure to prosecute. The clerk shall enter judgment accordingly.**

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Denise K. Vowell
Special Master