

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

**No. 03-1848V**

**Filed: April 4, 2012**

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LUIS CAVAZOS and  
NORA LINDA CAVAZOS, parents of  
Luis Daniel Cavazos, a minor,

Petitioners,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES

Respondent.

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

**DECISION<sup>1</sup>**

On August 4, 2003, petitioners filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*<sup>2</sup> [the “Vaccine Act” or “Program”], on behalf of their child, Luis Daniel Cavazos [“Luis”].

On February 7, 2012, I granted petitioners’ prior counsel’s motion to withdraw and ordered petitioners to contact my chambers by February 28, 2012 to schedule a status conference. Petitioners failed to respond to my order, and on February 29, 2012, I issued a show cause order instructing pro se petitioners Luis and Nora Cavazos to contact my chambers, by no later than March 30, 2012, to schedule a status conference. To date, petitioners have not contacted my chambers.

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<sup>1</sup> Because this unpublished decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, I intend to post this decision on the United States Court of Federal Claims’ website, in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), petitioners have 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.

<sup>2</sup> National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755 (1986). Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all “§” references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2006).

## 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.<sup>3</sup>

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).<sup>4</sup> Decisions in each of the three “test cases” pertaining to the PSC’s second theory also rejected the petitioners’ causation theories, and 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 submit new evidence on causation or to file a written request to dismiss this case.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> Petitioners in *Snyder* did not appeal the decision of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

<sup>5</sup> As I noted in my February 7, 2012 and February 29, 2012 orders, the status conference petitioners were instructed to schedule was intended to be an opportunity for me to explain to petitioners the next steps in this case, now that they are no longer represented by an attorney and are proceeding pro se.

## II. Failure to Prosecute.

It is petitioners' duty to respond to court orders. As I reminded petitioners in my February 29, 2012 show cause 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 Luis suffered a "Table Injury" – i.e., an injury falling within the Vaccine Injury Table – corresponding to one of Luis' vaccinations, or 2) that Luis 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 that petitioners have proven their case by a preponderance of the evidence based upon "the claims of petitioners 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 Luis suffered a "Table Injury." Further, the record does not contain a medical opinion or any other persuasive evidence indicating that Luis' autism spectrum disorder was vaccine-caused.

Accordingly, it is clear from the record in this case that petitioners have failed to demonstrate either that Luis suffered a "Table Injury" or that Luis' 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.**

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**Denise K. Vowell**  
Special Master