

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

In the Matter of GARY CLINTON and U.S. POSTAL SERVICE,
POST OFFICE, Lansing, MI

*Docket No. 02-875; Submitted on the Record;
Issued August 2, 2002*

DECISION and ORDER

Before COLLEEN DUFFY KIKO, DAVID S. GERSON,
WILLIE T.C. THOMAS

The issue is whether appellant has met his burden of proof in establishing that his carpal tunnel syndrome is causally related to factors of his employment.

On January 12, 2001 appellant, then a 54-year-old mailhandler, filed a claim for possible carpal tunnel syndrome, which he related to repetitive motion in working nixie mail. In a February 27, 2001 decision, the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs denied appellant's claim on the grounds that he had not established that his condition was causally related to his employment. Appellant requested a written review of the record by an Office hearing representative. In a November 7, 2001 decision, the Office hearing representative affirmed the Office's February 27, 2001 decision.

The Board finds that appellant has not met his burden of proof in establishing that carpal tunnel syndrome is causally related to his employment.

To establish that an injury was sustained in the performance of duty in an occupational disease claim, a claimant must submit the following: (1) medical evidence establishing the presence or existence of the disease or condition for which compensation is claimed;¹ (2) a factual statement identifying the employment factors alleged to have caused or contributed to the presence or occurrence of the disease or condition;² and (3) medical evidence establishing that the employment factors identified by the claimant were the proximate cause of the condition for which compensation is claimed or, stated differently, medical evidence establishing that the diagnosed condition is causally related to the employment factors identified by the claimant.³ The medical evidence required to establish causal relationship, generally, is rationalized medical

¹ See *Ronald K. White*, 37 ECAB 176, 178 (1985).

² See *Walter D. Morehead*, 31 ECAB 188, 194 (1979).

³ See generally *Lloyd C. Wiggs*, 32 ECAB 1023, 1029 (1981).

opinion evidence. Rationalized medical opinion evidence is medical evidence which includes a physician's rationalized opinion on the issue of whether there is a causal relationship between the claimant's diagnosed condition and the implicated employment factors. The opinion of the physician must be based on a complete factual and medical background of the claimant,⁴ must be one of reasonable medical certainty,⁵ and must be supported by medical rationale explaining the nature of the relationship between the diagnosed condition and the specific employment factors identified by the claimant.⁶

In a February 13, 2001 report, Dr. Ashraf Abdullah, an internist, stated that appellant had complaints of slight numbness and tingling in both hands. He was referred for an electromyogram (EMG) which showed mild bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome and mild right ulnar neuropathy. Dr. Abdullah noted that the EMG also showed denervation changes suggestive of C7 to C8 radiculopathy. In a March 12, 2001 report, Dr. Abdullah repeated his description of the EMG findings. He noted that appellant had requested the report to support his claim for disability. Dr. Abdullah's reports establish that appellant has bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome and right ulnar neuropathy. However, Dr. Abdullah gave no opinion on the cause of appellant's conditions. He did not specifically state that appellant's carpal tunnel syndrome and ulnar neuropathy were caused by appellant's work and he did not explain how appellant's description of repetitive motion in handling mail would cause the diagnosed conditions. Dr. Abdullah's reports, therefore, lack sufficient probative value to establish appellant's claim that his carpal tunnel syndrome and ulnar neuropathy are causally related to his work. Appellant has not met his burden of proof.

The decisions of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs dated November 7 and February 27, 2001 are hereby affirmed.

Dated, Washington, DC
August 2, 2002

Colleen Duffy Kiko
Member

David S. Gerson
Alternate Member

Willie T.C. Thomas
Alternate Member

⁴ *William Nimitz, Jr.*, 30 ECAB 567, 570 (1979).

⁵ *See Morris Scanlon*, 11 ECAB 384, 385 (1960).

⁶ *See William E. Enright*, 31 ECAB 426, 430 (1980).