

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

In the Matter of DOROTHA WHITE and U.S. POSTAL SERVICE,
POST OFFICE, Duluth, GA

*Docket No. 01-2273; Submitted on the Record;
Issued April 25, 2002*

DECISION and ORDER

Before COLLEEN DUFFY KIKO, WILLIE T.C. THOMAS,
A. PETER KANJORSKI

The issue is whether appellant established that her bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome was causally related to her employment.

On December 27, 2000 appellant, then a 51-year-old distribution clerk, filed a claim for occupational disease, alleging that her bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome was caused by her federal employment.

In reports dated April 21, 1999 and February 16, 2001, Dr. Amy M. Lang, Board-certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation, conducted nerve conduction studies and electromyography tests and found that appellant had mild right carpal tunnel syndrome, and mild-moderate left carpal tunnel syndrome with evidence of progression.

By letter dated March 20, 2001, the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs advised appellant that she needed additional information to support her claim. Although appellant did respond to this letter, no additional medical reports were provided.

By decision dated May 9, 2001, the Office denied appellant's claim on the grounds that she failed to submit evidence that would support her allegation that her condition was caused by her employment.

The Board finds that appellant failed to establish that she sustained an occupational disease while in the performance of duty.

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; (2) a factual statement identifying the employment factors alleged to have caused or contributed to the presence or occurrence of the disease or condition; 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 was causally related to the employment factors identified by the claimant.¹

The medical evidence required to establish a causal relationship generally, is rationalized medical 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 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, must be one of reasonable medical certainty, and must be supported by medical rationale explaining the nature of the relationship between the diagnosed condition and the specific factors identified by claimant.²

In this case, appellant's evidence included reports of bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. However, neither of Dr. Lang's reports established that her condition was causally related to her employment. Due to these deficiencies, Dr. Lang's reports are of diminished probative value and are insufficient to establish appellant's claim of injury.³

Consequently, as appellant has not submitted rationalized medical evidence explaining how and why her bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome was caused by her federal employment, the Office properly denied appellant's claim for compensation.

¹ *Ruth Seuell*, 48 ECAB 188 (1996).

² *Victor Woodhams*, 41 ECAB 345 (1989).

³ *Vicky Hannis*, 48 ECAB 538 (1997).

The May 9, 2001 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is affirmed.

Dated, Washington, DC
April 25, 2002

Colleen Duffy Kiko
Member

Willie T.C. Thomas
Alternate Member

A. Peter Kanjorski
Alternate Member