



an October 18, 2004 decision, the Board affirmed the termination of appellant's wage-loss compensation benefits effective July 23, 2001 on the grounds that she no longer had any disability causally related to her January 20, 2001 employment injuries. The Board also found that appellant failed to establish that her additional conditions of an emotional condition and complex regional pain disorder or RSD were causally related to her employment injury of January 20, 2001.<sup>1</sup> In a July 17, 2006 decision, the Board affirmed a December 8, 2005 Office decision that appellant failed to establish that her claimed RSD condition was caused or aggravated by the January 20, 2001 work injury.<sup>2</sup> The facts of the case, as set forth in the Board's prior decisions, are incorporated herein by reference.

In an October 25, 2006 letter, appellant, through her attorney, requested reconsideration and argued that the medical evidence supported that her RSD condition was caused by the January 20, 2001 work injury. In a September 6, 2006 report, Dr. Jayam Iyer, a Board-certified anesthesiologist, noted the history of injury and appellant's treatment and advised that he was familiar with the accepted conditions of the claim. He opined that appellant's conditions of complex regional pain syndrome of the left upper extremity and the right lower extremity were permanent and directly caused by the fall at work. Dr. Iyer advised that these conditions would not present as an aggravation as there was no history in the medical records as to her physical problems preceding the fall at work. He stated that appellant's treatment and objective testing correlated with her symptoms and opined that her complex regional pain syndrome had its onset from the traumatic event. Dr. Iyer explained that when one has a traumatic injury, usually the nerves and senses in the body react; however, in appellant's case, the nerves overreacted and went "haywire." He advised that this condition is known as complex regional pain syndrome.

By decision dated February 23, 2007, the Office denied modification of its prior decision.

### **LEGAL PRECEDENT**

A claimant seeking benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act<sup>3</sup> has the burden of establishing the essential elements of her claim by the weight of the reliable, probative and substantial evidence, including that any specific condition or disability for work for which she claims compensation is causally related to the employment injury.<sup>4</sup> To establish a causal relationship between the condition, as well as any attendant disability claimed and the employment injury, an employee must submit rationalized medical evidence, based on a complete factual and medical background, supporting such a causal relationship.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Docket No. 04-1347 (issued October 18, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Docket No. 06-796 (issued July 17, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 8101 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> *Jacquelyn L. Oliver*, 48 ECAB 232, 235-36 (1996).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

Causal relationship is a medical issue and the medical evidence required to establish a causal relationship is rationalized medical evidence.<sup>6</sup> Rationalized medical evidence is medical evidence which includes a physician's rationalized medical 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, 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 employment factors identified by the claimant.<sup>7</sup> Neither the fact that a disease or condition manifests itself during a period of employment nor the belief that the disease or condition was caused or aggravated by employment factors or incidents is sufficient to establish causal relationship.<sup>8</sup>

### ANALYSIS

In support of appellant's contention that her claimed condition of RSD is causally related to the January 20, 2001 work injury, she submitted a September 6, 2006 medical report from Dr. Iyer.

The Board notes that Dr. Iyer's report is based on a proper factual and medical history. His report, however, is of diminished probative value and is insufficient to establish appellant's claim. In his September 6, 2006 report, Dr. Iyer failed to provide sufficient medical rationale in support of his stated opinion on causal relationship between appellant's RSD condition to her left upper extremity and to her right lower extremity. The only explanation provided was that there was no prior history of her symptoms before the work injury such that the work injury caused RSD. The Board has held that an opinion that a condition is causally related because the employee was asymptomatic before the injury is insufficient, without sufficient rationale, to establish causal relationship.<sup>9</sup> Although Dr. Iyer noted objective evidence of appellant's RSD in her left arm and right leg and explained that such evidence was supportive of the diagnosis of the evolution of RSD, he did not adequately address why RSD was related to the January 20, 2001 work injury. While he opined that there was a causal relationship and provided a general explanation that appellant's nerves basically "overreacted" and went "haywire" at the time of the traumatic event, he failed to explain the pathophysiological processes by which RSD would specifically result from the January 20, 2001 work injury. Accordingly, Dr. Iyer's statement on causation is insufficient. Thus, while supportive of appellant's claim, Dr. Iyer's opinion is of diminished probative value because it lacks sufficient medical rationale to establish that the incident of January 20, 2001 caused or contributed to an evolution of RSD.

Therefore, Dr. Iyer's report is insufficient to establish that appellant's RSD is related to the accepted employment injury. As appellant has not discharged her burden of proof on the issue of causal relationship, the Office properly denied her claim.

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<sup>6</sup> *Elizabeth Stanislav*, 49 ECAB 540 (1998).

<sup>7</sup> *Leslie C. Moore*, 52 ECAB 132 (2000); *Victor J. Woodhams*, 41 ECAB 345 (1989).

<sup>8</sup> *Dennis M. Mascarenas*, 49 ECAB 215 (1997).

<sup>9</sup> *See Cleopatra McDougal-Saddler*, 47 ECAB 480, 489 (1996); *Thomas D. Petrylak*, 39 ECAB 276 (1987).

**CONCLUSION**

Appellant has not established that her claimed RSD condition was caused or aggravated by the January 20, 2001 work injury.

**ORDER**

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs decision dated February 23, 2007 is affirmed.

Issued: November 6, 2007  
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

David S. Gerson, Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Michael E. Groom, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board