

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

In the Matter of TAMARA MARTIN and U.S. POSTAL SERVICE,
SOUTH SIDE STATION, Little Rock, Ark.

Docket No. 97-2751; Submitted on the Record;
Issued June 4, 1999

DECISION and ORDER

Before DAVID S. GERSON, WILLIE T.C. THOMAS,
MICHAEL E. GROOM

The issue is whether appellant has met her burden of proof in establishing that her bilateral tendinitis of the arms was causally related to factors of her employment.

On April 9, 1997 appellant, then a 33-year-old central forwarding service clerk, stated that she had tendinitis of the left and right wrists, forearms, elbows and shoulders from repetitive motion in keying mail. She indicated that the pain would begin after 30 minutes of keying mail and would become progressively worse after long hours of keying mail. In a July 11, 1997 decision, the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, denied appellant's claim on the grounds that she had not established that she sustained an injury in the performance of duty because the evidence of record did not establish that her condition was causally related to factors of her employment.

The Board finds that appellant has not met her burden of proof in establishing that her bilateral tendinitis of the arms was causally to factors of her 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

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).

The medical evidence required to establish 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 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 certainty⁵ 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

Appellant submitted numerous reports on her work restrictions and notes from physicians on whether she could perform her regular duties or light-duty work. In a November 4, 1996 work restriction report, Dr. Earl Peeples, a Board-certified orthopedic surgeon specializing in hand surgery, indicated that appellant had right arm pain with tendinitis and noted that repetitive motion aggravated her symptoms. This note does not contain a rationalized medical opinion explaining how appellant's work caused or contributed her condition and subsequent disability. Appellant did not submit any other medical evidence which addressed the issue of causal relationship between her job duties and her claimed bilateral tendinitis of the arm. Appellant therefore has not met her burden of proof.

The decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, dated July 11, 1997, is hereby affirmed.

Dated, Washington, D.C.
June 4, 1999

David S. Gerson
Member

Willie T.C. Thomas
Alternate Member

Michael E. Groom
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).