

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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In the Matter of KATHIE CHRISTMAN and U.S. POSTAL SERVICE,  
POST OFFICE, Kansas City, MO

*Docket No. 01-859; Submitted on the Record;  
Issued November 5, 2001*

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DECISION and ORDER

Before MICHAEL E. GROOM, A. PETER KANJORSKI,  
PRISCILLA ANNE SCHWAB

The issue is whether appellant developed right ring finger tenosynovitis due to her federal employment.

Appellant, a 46-year-old letter sorter machine clerk, filed a notice of occupational disease on October 13, 1993 alleging that she developed bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome due to her federal duties. The Office of Workers' Compensation Programs accepted her claim on December 30, 1993 and authorized surgeries. The Office granted appellant a schedule award for an 11 percent permanent impairment of the right upper extremity and a 17 percent permanent impairment of the left upper extremity.

Appellant filed a notice of occupational disease on May 28, 1999 alleging that she developed bilateral hand and wrist tenosynovitis due to the duties of her current position of clerk, which required the manual casing of flats and letters, throwing letters, magazines and newspapers, and weighing and distributing mail. The Office accepted this claim on August 9, 1999.

Appellant filed a notice of recurrence of disability on May 28, 1999 alleging pain in both wrists. The Office accepted appellant's claim for medical treatment of bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome on February 10, 2000. The Office specifically excluded acceptance of the additional condition of right ring finger tenosynovitis.<sup>1</sup>

The Board finds that appellant has failed to meet her burden of proof in establishing that she developed right ring finger tenosynovitis due to her federal employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the Office's February 10, 2000 decision, appellant submitted additional new evidence. As the Office has not considered this evidence in reaching a final decision, the Board may not consider it for the first time on appeal. 20 C.F.R. § 501.2(c).

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 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 is causally related to the employment factors identified by the claimant. The evidence required to establish causal relationship is rationalized medical opinion evidence, based upon a complete factual and medical background, showing a causal relationship between the claimed condition and identified factors. The belief of a claimant that a condition was caused or aggravated by the employment is not sufficient to establish causal relation.<sup>2</sup>

In this case, appellant identified the factors of employment to which she attributed her right ring finger condition. Appellant has also provided a medical diagnosis of right ring finger tenosynovitis. However, appellant failed to submit the necessary rationalized medical opinion evidence to establish a causal relationship between her diagnosed condition and her federal employment.

The reports dated August 23 and September 13, 1999 from Dr. Barry Rose, a Board-certified orthopedic surgeon, diagnosed right ring finger tenosynovitis. However, Dr. Rose did not provide any history of injury or an opinion on the causal relationship between appellant's diagnosed condition and her federal employment. For these reasons, appellant has failed to submit sufficient medical opinion evidence to meet her burden of proof and the Office properly denied her claim.

The February 10, 2000 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is hereby affirmed.

Dated, Washington, DC  
November 5, 2001

Michael E. Groom  
Alternate Member

A. Peter Kanjorski  
Alternate Member

Priscilla Anne Schwab  
Alternate Member

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<sup>2</sup> *Lourdes Harris*, 45 ECAB 545, 547 (1994).