

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 16-1321V

Filed: September 26, 2017

UNPUBLISHED

BRIAN CARNEY,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

Special Processing Unit (SPU);
Attorneys' Fees and Costs

*Diana Lynn Stadelnikas, Maglio Christopher & Toale, PA, Sarasota, FL, for petitioner.
Camille Michelle Collett, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for respondent.*

DECISION ON ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS¹

Dorsey, Chief Special Master:

On October 11, 2016, petitioner filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*,² (the "Vaccine Act"). Petitioner alleged that he suffered Guillain-Barre Syndrome ("GBS") as a result of his August 16, 2014 influenza ("flu") vaccination. On August 11, 2017, the undersigned issued a decision awarding compensation to petitioner based on respondent's proffer. (ECF No. 35.)

On September 20, 2017, petitioner filed a motion for attorneys' fees and costs. (ECF No. 39.) Petitioner requests attorneys' fees in the amount of \$17,192.40 and attorneys' costs in the amount of \$1,266.12. (*Id.* at 1.) In accordance with General

¹ Because this unpublished decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, the undersigned intends to post it on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website, in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2012) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, the undersigned agrees that the identified material fits within this definition, the undersigned will redact such material from public access.

² National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755. Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all "§" references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2012).

Order #9, petitioner's counsel represents that petitioner incurred no out-of-pocket expenses. Thus, the total amount requested is \$18,458.52.

On September 22, 2017, respondent filed a response to petitioner's motion. (ECF No. 40.) Respondent argues that "[n]either the Vaccine Act nor Vaccine Rule 13 contemplates any role for respondent in the resolution of a request by a petitioner for an award of attorneys' fees and costs." *Id.* at 1. Respondent adds, however, that he "is satisfied the statutory requirements for an award of attorneys' fees and costs are met in this case." *Id.* at 2. Respondent "respectfully recommends that the Chief Special Master exercise her discretion and determine a reasonable award for attorneys' fees and costs." *Id.* at 3.

On September 25, 2017, petitioner filed a reply. (ECF No. 41.) In his reply, petitioner disputes respondent's characterization of his role in resolving attorneys' fees and costs, objects to respondent's failure to address specific issues, and reiterates petitioner's position that the amount requested is reasonable.

The undersigned has reviewed the billing records submitted with petitioner's request. On August 6, 2016, attorney Anne Toale billed 1.0 hour of travel time at her full hourly rate of \$367 per hour. (ECF No. 39-1, p. 3.) Consistent with routine practice in this program, the undersigned reduces petitioner's counsel's hourly for this travel time rate by 50%. See, e.g., *Hocraffer v. HHS*, No. 99-533V, 2011 WL 3705153, at *24 (noting that "Special masters consistently award compensation for travel time at 50% of the billing rate in the Vaccine Program."). This results in a reduction of \$183.50. In the undersigned's experience, the request otherwise appears reasonable, and the undersigned finds no further cause to reduce the requested hours or rates

The Vaccine Act permits an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs. § 15(e). Based on the reasonableness of petitioner's request, the undersigned **GRANTS** petitioner's motion for attorneys' fees and costs.

Accordingly, the undersigned awards the total of \$18,275.02³ as a lump sum in the form of a check jointly payable to petitioner and petitioner's counsel Diana Lynn Stadelnikas, Esq.

The clerk of the court shall enter judgment in accordance herewith.⁴

³ This amount is intended to cover all legal expenses incurred in this matter. This award encompasses all charges by the attorney against a client, "advanced costs" as well as fees for legal services rendered. Furthermore, § 15(e)(3) prevents an attorney from charging or collecting fees (including costs) that would be in addition to the amount awarded herein. See generally *Beck v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, 924 F.2d 1029 (Fed. Cir.1991).

⁴ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), entry of judgment can be expedited by the parties' joint filing of notice renouncing the right to seek review.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Nora Beth Dorsey
Nora Beth Dorsey
Chief Special Master