

In the Matter of the Compensation of  
**JOANN GREGORY, Claimant**  
Own Motion No. 06-0035M  
OWN MOTION ORDER  
Unrepresented Claimant  
SAIF Legal, Defense Attorneys

Reviewing Panel: Members Langer and Biehl.

The SAIF Corporation has submitted a Carrier's Own Motion Recommendation against the reopening of claimant's June 19, 1986 injury claim for a "worsening" of her previously accepted condition ("anterior cruciate ligament injury, left knee"). See ORS 656.278(1)(a). Claimant's aggravation rights have expired. SAIF opposed reopening, contending among other issues, that claimant's compensable condition does not require any medical treatment that qualifies for claim reopening. Based on the following reasoning, we find that the claim does not qualify for reopening.

Pursuant to ORS 656.278(1)(a), among the requirements for the reopening of an Own Motion claim for a worsening of a compensable injury is that the worsening must require hospitalization, surgery (either inpatient or outpatient), or other curative treatment prescribed in lieu of hospitalization that is necessary to enable the worker to return to work. *Health A. Wiltfong*, 57 Van Natta 3108 (2005).

In *Larry D. Little*, 54 Van Natta 2536 (2002), we concluded that if any one of the three qualifying medical treatments listed in ORS 656.278(1)(a) is satisfied, a "worsening condition" claim meets the medical treatment requirement for reopening in Own Motion. In *Little*, 54 Van Natta at 2542, we defined the three qualifying medical treatments listed in ORS 656.278(1)(a) in the following manner: (1) "Surgery" is defined as an invasive procedure undertaken for a curative purpose that is likely to temporarily disable the worker; and (2) "hospitalization" is defined as a nondiagnostic procedure that requires an overnight stay in a hospital or similar facility.

We also found that the third type of qualifying treatment required establishment of three elements: (1) curative treatment (treatment that relates to or is used in the cure of diseases, tends to heal, restore to health, or to bring about recovery); (2) prescribed (directed or ordered by a doctor) in lieu of (in the place of or instead of) hospitalization; and (3) that is necessary (required or essential) to enable (render able or make possible) the injured worker to return to work. *Little*, 54 Van Natta at 2546.

Whether a worsening of the compensable injury requires hospitalization, inpatient or outpatient surgery, or “other curative treatment prescribed in lieu of hospitalization that is necessary to enable the injured worker to return to work” presents a medical question that must be addressed by persuasive medical evidence. In other words, we cannot infer that a treatment involves hospitalization, inpatient or outpatient surgery, or “other curative treatment prescribed in lieu of hospitalization that is necessary to enable the injured worker to return to work.” *SAIF v. Calder*, 157 Or App 224, 227-28 (1998) (“the Board is not an agency with specialized medical expertise entitled to take official notice of technical facts within its specialized knowledge”); *Terry L. Smith*, 55 Van Natta 2763 (2003). This question must be answered by persuasive medical evidence.

Here, on January 9, 2006, claimant sought treatment for left knee complaints. Noting that claimant’s left knee was stable and had full motion, Dr. Brenneke, claimant’s attending physician, recommended anti-inflammatory and pain medications. Dr. Brenneke instructed claimant to return for a follow up examination if the left knee symptoms persisted. (Ex. 3). No additional medical records addressing claimant’s treatment for her left knee condition have been submitted.<sup>1</sup>

Based on our review, the record does not establish that claimant’s conditions required hospitalization, surgery or other curative treatment that was prescribed in lieu of (instead of or in place of) hospitalization that was necessary to enable him to return to work. ORS 656.278(1)(a); *Larry D. Little*, 54 Van Natta at 2546. In other words, no physician recommended surgery or hospitalization. Nor is there any evidence that there was any medical treatment prescribed that constituted “other curative treatment prescribed in lieu of hospitalization that is necessary to

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<sup>1</sup> The record does not demonstrate that claimant has initiated a “post-aggravation rights” new medical condition claim. Thus, any consideration of “unclaimed” conditions would be premature. *See* ORS 656.267(3); ORS 656.278(1)(b). Instead, our decision is limited to a review of claimant’s worsening claim for her previously accepted left knee condition. Furthermore, our decision is premised on a finding that no hospitalization, surgery or other curative treatment prescribed in lieu of hospitalization that is necessary to enable claimant to return to work as required under ORS 656.278(1)(a) has been rendered or recommended for claimant’s accepted left knee condition. Under such circumstances, we are unable to authorize the reopening of claimant’s 1986 left knee condition claim under ORS 656.278(1)(a).

If claimant wishes to initiate a new or omitted medical condition claim she may request formal written acceptance of the claim from SAIF. ORS 656.267(1). If SAIF receives such a claim, and the claim is “determined to be compensable,” it must be processed according to the Board’s rules. *See* 438-012-0001(4) (WCB Admin. Order No. 3-2005, eff. January 1, 2006); OAR 438-012-0030(1); *James W. Jordan*, 58 Van Natta 34, 37 (2006).

enable the injured worker to return to work.” *See Stephen Jackson, 55 Van Natta 2421, 2422 (2003); Mark R. Gescher, 55 Van Natta 1956 (2003)* (ORS 656.278(1)(a) not satisfied where, although treatment (prescription medication) was arguably curative and necessary to enable the claimant to return to work, there was no evidence that the treatment was prescribed in lieu of hospitalization).<sup>2</sup> Consequently, we are unable to authorize a reopening of the Own Motion claim.

Accordingly, the request for claim reopening is denied. Claimant’s entitlement to medical expenses pursuant to ORS 656.245 regarding his accepted conditions is not affected by this order.<sup>3 4</sup>

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

Entered at Salem, Oregon on April 5, 2006

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<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the record does not contain medical evidence that claimant’s compensable condition resulted in an “inability to work.” ORS 656.278(1)(a). In this particular case, this matter need not be addressed because even if the “inability to work” issue was found in claimant’s favor, the record would still be insufficient to support a claim reopening under ORS 656.278(1)(a) for the reasons expressed above.

<sup>3</sup> If a party obtains medical evidence that addresses the statutorily required medical treatment (*i.e.*, hospitalization, surgery or curative treatment prescribed in lieu of hospitalization that is necessary to enable the injured worker to return to work) and the “inability to work” components, that party may request reconsideration of our decision. However, because our authority to reconsider this decision expires within 30 days after the mailing of the Own Motion Order, the reconsideration request must be filed within that 30-day period. OAR 438-012-0065(2).

<sup>4</sup> Finally, inasmuch as claimant is unrepresented, she may wish to consult the Workers’ Compensation Ombudsman, whose job it is to assist injured workers in such matters. She may contact the Workers’ Compensation Ombudsman, free of charge, at 1-800-927-1271, or write to:

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION OMBUDSMAN  
DEPT OF CONSUMER & BUSINESS SERVICES  
PO BOX 14480  
SALEM, OR 97309-0405