

# In the United States Court of Federal Claims

## OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 19-0548V

UNPUBLISHED

DEBORAH COUTU,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

Chief Special Master Corcoran

Filed: October 20, 2020

Special Processing Unit (SPU);  
Damages Decision Based on Proffer;  
Influenza (Flu) Vaccine; Shoulder  
Injury Related to Vaccine  
Administration (SIRVA)

*Leah VaSahnja Durant, Law Offices of Leah V. Durant, PLLC, Washington, DC, for Petitioner.*

*James Vincent Lopez, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Respondent.*

### **DECISION AWARDING DAMAGES<sup>1</sup>**

On April 15, 2019, Deborah Coutu filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*<sup>2</sup> (the “Vaccine Act”). Petitioner alleges that she suffered a Shoulder Injury Related to Vaccine Administration (“SIRVA”) as a result of an influenza (“flu”) vaccine administered to her on February 8, 2018. Petition at 1. Petitioner further alleges that her injury lasted longer than six months. Petition at 3. The case was assigned to the Special Processing Unit of the Office of Special Masters.

On June 18, 2020, a ruling on entitlement was issued, finding Petitioner entitled to compensation for SIRVA. On October 19, 2020, Respondent filed a proffer on award of compensation (“Proffer”) indicating Petitioner should be awarded a total of \$119,867.00 (consisting of \$115,000.00 in pain and suffering and \$4,867.00 for past unreimbursable

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<sup>1</sup> Because this unpublished decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, I am required to post it on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website in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). **This means the decision will be available to anyone with access to the internet.** 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, I agree that the identified material fits within this definition, I will redact such material from public access.

<sup>2</sup> 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).

expenses). Proffer at 1-2. In the Proffer, Respondent represented that Petitioner agrees with the proffered award. *Id.* Based on the record as a whole, I find that Petitioner is entitled to an award as stated in the Proffer.

Pursuant to the terms stated in the attached Proffer, **I award Petitioner a lump sum payment of \$119,867.00 (consisting of \$115,000.00 in pain and suffering and \$4,867.00 for past unreimbursable expenses) in the form of a check payable to Petitioner.** This amount represents compensation for all damages that would be available under § 15(a).

The clerk of the court is directed to enter judgment in accordance with this decision.<sup>3</sup>

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

**s/Brian H. Corcoran**  
Brian H. Corcoran  
Chief Special Master

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

|                         |   |                               |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| _____                   | ) |                               |
| DEBORAH COUTU,          | ) |                               |
|                         | ) |                               |
| Petitioner,             | ) |                               |
|                         | ) | No. 19-548V                   |
| v.                      | ) | Chief Special Master Corcoran |
|                         | ) | ECF                           |
| SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND | ) |                               |
| HUMAN SERVICES,         | ) |                               |
|                         | ) |                               |
| Respondent.             | ) |                               |
| _____                   | ) |                               |

**RESPONDENT’S PROFFER ON AWARD OF COMPENSATION**

On April 15, 2019, Deborah Coutu (“petitioner”) filed a petition for compensation under the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, 42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-1 to -34 (“Vaccine Act” or “Act”), alleging that she suffered a Shoulder Injury Related to Vaccine Administration (“SIRVA”), as defined in the Vaccine Injury Table, following administration of an influenza (“flu”) vaccine she received on February 8, 2018. On June 17, 2020, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (“respondent”) filed a Rule 4(c) Report indicating that this case is appropriate for compensation under the terms of the Act for a SIRVA Table injury, and on June 18, 2020, the Chief Special Master issued a Ruling on Entitlement finding petitioner entitled to compensation. ECF No. 20; ECF No. 21.

**I. Items of Compensation**

A. Pain and Suffering

Respondent proffers that petitioner should be awarded \$115,000.00 in pain and suffering.

See 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a)(4). Petitioner agrees.

B. Past Unreimbursable Expenses

Evidence supplied by petitioner documents that she incurred past unreimbursable expenses related to her vaccine-related injury. Respondent proffers that petitioner should be awarded past unreimbursable expenses in the amount of \$4,867.00. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a)(1)(B). Petitioner agrees.

These amounts represent all elements of compensation to which petitioner is entitled under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a). Petitioner agrees.

II. Form of the Award

Petitioner is a competent adult. Evidence of guardianship is not required in this case. Respondent recommends that the compensation provided to petitioner should be made through a lump sum payment as described below and requests that the Chief Special Master's decision and the Court's judgment award the following<sup>1</sup>: a lump sum payment of \$119,867.00, in the form of a check payable to petitioner.

III. Summary of Recommended Payments Following Judgment

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Lump sum payable to petitioner, Deborah Coutu: | <b>\$119,867.00</b> |
|--|---------------------|

Respectfully submitted,

JEFFREY BOSSERT CLARK  
Acting Assistant Attorney General

C. SALVATORE D'ALESSIO  
Acting Director  
Torts Branch, Civil Division

CATHARINE E. REEVES  
Deputy Director  
Torts Branch, Civil Division

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<sup>1</sup> Should petitioner die prior to entry of judgment, the parties reserve the right to move the Court for appropriate relief. In particular, respondent would oppose any award for future lost earnings and future pain and suffering.

HEATHER L. PEARLMAN  
Assistant Director  
Torts Branch, Civil Division

s/ JAMES V. LOPEZ  
James V. Lopez  
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Date: October 19, 2020