

STATE OF FLORIDA  
DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

SHAKEITRIYIA EDWARDS, on behalf  
of and as parent and natural  
guardian of, DESMOND GOVAN, a  
minor,

Petitioner,

vs.

Case No. 14-0723N

FLORIDA BIRTH-RELATED  
NEUROLOGICAL INJURY COMPENSATION  
ASSOCIATION,

Respondent,

and

ORLANDO HEALTH, INC., d/b/a  
WINNIE PALMER HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN  
AND BABIES,

Intervenor.

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SUMMARY FINAL ORDER OF DISMISSAL

This cause came on for consideration upon Respondent's  
Motion for Summary Final Order, filed on April 28, 2014.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On February 12, 2014, Petitioner, Shakeitriyia Edwards on  
behalf of and as parent and natural guardian of Desmond Govan  
(Desmond), a minor, filed a Petition for Benefits Pursuant to  
Florida Statute Section 766.301 et seq. (Petition) with the  
Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) for compensation under

the Florida Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Plan (Plan). The Petition named Dennis Szurkus, M.D., as the physician who provided obstetric services at the birth of Desmond at Winnie Palmer Hospital located in Orlando, Florida, on February 14, 2009.

DOAH served the Florida Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Association (NICA) with a copy of the Petition on February 19, 2014. Winnie Palmer Hospital and Dr. Szurkus were served with copies of the Petition on February 20, 2014.

On March 10, 2014, Orlando Health, Inc., d/b/a Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women and Babies filed a Petition for Leave to Intervene, which was granted by Order dated March 27, 2014. As of the date of this Summary Final Order of Dismissal, Dr. Szurkus has not petitioned to intervene in this proceeding.

On April 28, 2014, NICA filed a Motion for Summary Final Order, stating that, at the time of Desmond's birth, Dr. Szurkus was not a "participating physician" as that term is defined by section 766.302(7), Florida Statutes (2012). Neither Petitioner nor Intervenor has filed a response to the Motion for Summary Final Order.

#### FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Petition named Dr. Szurkus as the physician providing obstetric services at Desmond's birth on February 14, 2009.

2. Attached to the Motion for Summary Final Order is an affidavit of NICA's custodian of records, Tim Daughtry, attesting to the following, which has not been refuted:

One of my official duties as Custodian of Records is to maintain NICA's official records relative to the status of physicians as participating physicians in the Florida Birth-Related Neurological Compensation Plan who have timely paid the Five Thousand Dollar (\$5,000.00) assessment prescribed in Section 766.314(4)(c), Florida Statutes, and the status of physicians who may be exempt from payment of the Five Thousand Dollar (\$5,000.00) assessment pursuant to Section 766.314(4)(c), Florida Statutes. Further, I maintain NICA's official records with respect to the payment of the Two Hundred Fifty Dollar (\$250.00) assessment required by Section 766.314(4)(b)1., Florida Statutes, by all non-participating, non-exempt physicians.

\* \* \*

As payments of the requisite assessments are received, NICA compiles data in the "NICA CARES" database for each physician. The "NICA CARES physician payment history/report" attached hereto for Dr. Dennis Szurkus indicates that on February 14, 2009, the date in which Dr. Szurkus participated in the delivery of Desmond Govan, as indicated in the Petitioner's Petition for Benefits, Dr. Szurkus did not pay the Five Thousand Dollar (\$5,000) assessment required for participation in the Florida Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Plan until September 21, 2009.

Further, it is NICA's policy that if a physician falls within the exemption from payment of the Five Thousand Dollar (\$5,000) assessment due to their status as a resident physician, assistant resident physician or intern as provided in Section 766.314(4)(c),

Florida Statutes, annual documentation as to such exempt status is required to be provided to NICA. NICA has no records with respect to Dr. Szurkus in relation to an exempt status for the year 2009.

3. The physician payment history/report for Dr. Szurkus supports Mr. Daughtry's affidavit.

4. Petitioner has not offered any exhibits, affidavits or any other evidence refuting the affidavit of Mr. Daughtry, which shows that on February 14, 2009, Dr. Szurkus had not paid his \$5,000 assessment for 2009.

5. At the time of the birth of Desmond, Dr. Szurkus was not a participating physician in the Plan.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

6. The Division of Administrative Hearings has jurisdiction over the parties to, and the subject matter of, these proceedings. §§ 766.301-766.316, Fla. Stat.

7. The Plan was established by the Legislature "for the purpose of providing compensation, irrespective of fault, for birth-related neurological injury claims" relating to births occurring on or after January 1, 1989. § 766.303(1), Fla. Stat.

8. The injured infant, her or his personal representative, parents, dependents, and next of kin may seek compensation under the Plan by filing a claim for compensation with the Division of Administrative Hearings. §§ 766.302(3), 766.303(2), and 766.305(1), Fla. Stat. The Florida Birth-Related Neurological

Injury Compensation Association, which administers the Plan, has "45 days from the date of service of a complete claim . . . in which to file a response to the petition and to submit relevant written information relating to the issue of whether the injury is a birth-related neurological injury." § 766.305(4), Fla. Stat.

9. If NICA determines that the injury alleged in a claim is a compensable birth-related neurological injury, it may award compensation to the claimant, provided that the award is approved by the administrative law judge to whom the claim has been assigned. § 766.305(7), Fla. Stat. If, on the other hand, NICA disputes the claim, as it has in the instant case, the dispute must be resolved by the assigned administrative law judge in accordance with the provisions of chapter 120, Florida Statutes. §§ 766.304, 766.309, and 766.31, Fla. Stat.

10. In discharging this responsibility, the administrative law judge must make the following determination based upon the available evidence:

(a) Whether the injury claimed is a birth-related neurological injury. If the claimant has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the administrative law judge, that the infant has sustained a brain or spinal cord injury caused by oxygen deprivation or mechanical injury and that the infant was thereby rendered permanently and substantially mentally and physically impaired, a rebuttable presumption shall arise that the

injury is a birth-related neurological injury as defined in s. 766.303(2).

(b) Whether obstetrical services were delivered by a participating physician in the course of labor, delivery, or resuscitation in the immediate postdelivery period in a hospital; or by a certified nurse midwife in a teaching hospital supervised by a participating physician in the course of labor, delivery, or resuscitation in the immediate postdelivery period in a hospital.

§ 766.309(1), Fla. Stat. An award may be sustained only if the administrative law judge concludes that the "infant has sustained a birth-related neurological injury and that obstetrical services were delivered by a participating physician at birth."

§ 766.31(1), Fla. Stat.

11. Pertinent to this case, "participating physician" is defined by section 766.302(7), to mean:

[A] physician licensed in Florida to practice medicine who practices obstetrics or performs obstetrical services either full-time or part-time and who had paid or was exempt from payment at the time of the injury the assessment required for participation in the birth-related neurological injury compensation plan for the year in which the injury occurred.

12. Dr. Szurkus had not paid his assessment of \$5,000 at the time Desmond was born; therefore, he was not a participating physician at the time of Desmond's birth. No evidence was submitted that, at the time of Desmond's birth, Dr. Szurkus was

excluded from paying the \$5,000 assessment required for participating physicians.

13. The obstetrical services provided during Desmond's birth were not provided by a participating physician. Thus, the claim of Desmond is not compensable under the Plan.

CONCLUSION

Based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is ORDERED that Respondent's Motion for Summary Final Order is granted, and the Petition is dismissed with prejudice.

DONE AND ORDERED this 16th day of May, 2014, in Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida.

*Susan Belyeu Kirkland*

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Filed with the Clerk of the  
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this 16th day of May, 2014.

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NOTICE OF RIGHT TO JUDICIAL REVIEW

Review of a final order of an administrative law judge shall be by appeal to the District Court of Appeal pursuant to section 766.311(1), Florida Statutes. Review proceedings are governed by the Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure. Such proceedings are commenced by filing the original notice of administrative appeal with the agency clerk of the Division of Administrative Hearings within 30 days of rendition of the order to be reviewed, and a copy, accompanied by filing fees prescribed by law, with the clerk of the appropriate District Court of Appeal. See § 766.311(1), Fla. Stat., and Fla. Birth-Related Neurological Injury Comp. Ass'n v. Carreras, 598 So. 2d 299 (Fla. 1st DCA 1992).