

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2012-44718
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: June 12, 2012
County: Macomb-36

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Vicki L. Armstrong

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge upon the Claimant's request for a hearing made pursuant to Michigan Compiled Laws 400.9 and 400.37, which govern the administrative hearing and appeal process. After due notice, a telephone hearing was commenced on June 12, 2012, from Lansing, Michigan. Claimant personally appeared and testified. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included Eligibility Specialist [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

During the hearing, Claimant waived the time period for the issuance of this decision in order to allow for the submission of additional medical evidence. The new evidence was forwarded to the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) for consideration. On September 19, 2012, the SHRT found Claimant was not disabled. This matter is now before the undersigned for a final decision.

ISSUE

Whether the Department of Human Services (the department) properly denied Claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P)?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

- (1) On January 24, 2012, Claimant filed an application for MA-P benefits alleging disability.
- (2) On March 19, 2012, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied Claimant's application for MA-P and Retro-MA indicating that he was capable of performing other work, pursuant to 20 CFR 416.920(f).

- (3) On March 23, 2012, the department caseworker sent Claimant notice that his application was denied.
- (4) On April 2, 2012, Claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
- (5) On May 17, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) found Claimant was not disabled and retained the capacity to perform a wide range of light work. (Department Exhibit B, pp 1-11).
- (6) Claimant has a history of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma specifically diffuse large B-cell lymphoma a Stage IV, nerve damage from chemotherapy, bulging disc at L5-S1, foraminal stenosis and numbness in his right leg.
- (7) Claimant is a 42 year old man whose birthday is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 6'0" tall and weighs 200 lbs. Claimant completed the 11th grade.
- (8) Claimant was appealing the denial of Social Security disability benefits at the time of the hearing.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by Subchapter XIX of Chapter 7 of The Public Health & Welfare Act, 42 USC 1397, and is administered by the Department, (DHS or department), pursuant to MCL 400.10 *et seq.* and MCL 400.105. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and the Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

Disability is defined as the inability to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. 20 CFR 416.905(a). The person claiming a physical or mental disability has the burden to establish it through the use of competent medical evidence from qualified medical sources such as his or her medical history, clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related activities or ability to reason and make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is alleged. 20 CFR 413.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908; 20 CFR 416.929(a). Similarly, conclusory statements by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind, absent supporting medical evidence, is insufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.927.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require several factors to be considered including: (1) the location/duration/frequency/intensity of an applicant's pain; (2) the type/dosage/effectiveness/side effects of any medication the applicant takes to relieve pain; (3) any treatment other than pain medication that the applicant has received to relieve pain; and, (4) the effect of the applicant's pain on his or her ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3). The applicant's pain must be assessed to determine the extent of his or her functional limitation(s) in light of the objective medical evidence presented. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(2).

In order to determine whether or not an individual is disabled, federal regulations require a five-step sequential evaluation process to be utilized. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(1). The five-step analysis requires the trier of fact to consider an individual's current work activity; the severity of the impairment(s) both in duration and whether it meets or equals a listed impairment in Appendix 1; residual functional capacity to determine whether an individual can perform past relevant work; and residual functional capacity along with vocational factors (e.g., age, education, and work experience) to determine if an individual can adjust to other work. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945.

If an individual is found disabled, or not disabled, at any step, a determination or decision is made with no need to evaluate subsequent steps. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If a determination cannot be made that an individual is disabled, or not disabled, at a particular step, the next step is required. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If an impairment does not meet or equal a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed before moving from Step 3 to Step 4. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945. Residual functional capacity is the most an individual can do despite the limitations based on all relevant evidence. 20 CFR 945(a)(1). An individual's residual functional capacity assessment is evaluated at both Steps 4 and 5. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). In determining disability, an individual's functional capacity to perform basic work activities is evaluated and if found that the individual has the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitation, disability will not be found. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv). In general, the individual has the responsibility to prove disability. 20 CFR 416.912(a). An impairment or combination of impairments is not severe if it does not significantly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.921(a). The individual has the responsibility to provide evidence of prior work experience; efforts to work; and any other factor showing how the impairment affects the ability to work. 20 CFR 416.912(c)(3)(5)(6).

As outlined above, the first step looks at the individual's current work activity. In the record presented, Claimant is not involved in substantial gainful activity and testified that he has not worked since 2010. Therefore, he is not disqualified from receiving disability benefits under Step 1.

The severity of the individual's alleged impairment(s) is considered under Step 2. The individual bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairments. In order to be considered disabled for MA purposes, the impairment must be severe. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(b). An impairment, or combination of impairments, is severe if it significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities regardless of age, education and work experience. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(c). Basic work activities means the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. 20 CFR 916.921(b). Examples include:

1. Physical functions such as walking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, pulling, reaching, carrying, or handling;
 2. Capacities for seeing, hearing, and speaking;
 3. Understanding, carrying out, and remembering simple instructions;
 4. Use of judgment;
 5. Responding appropriately to supervision, co-workers and usual work situations; and
 6. Dealing with changes in a routine work setting.
- Id.*

The second step allows for dismissal of a disability claim obviously lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v Bowen*, 880 F2d 860, 862 (CA 6, 1988). The severity requirement may still be employed as an administrative convenience to screen out claims that are totally groundless solely from a medical standpoint. *Id.* at 863 citing *Farris v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 773 F2d 85, 90 n.1 (CA 6, 1985). An impairment qualifies as non-severe only if, regardless of a claimant's age, education, or work experience, the impairment would not affect the claimant's ability to work. *Salmi v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 774 F2d 685, 692 (CA 6, 1985).

In the present case, Claimant alleges disability due to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma specifically diffuse large B-cell lymphoma Stage IV, nerve damage from chemotherapy, bulging disc at L5-S1, foraminal stenosis and numbness in his right leg.

On October 20, 2010, a second opinion was requested to verify the validity of the ejection fraction of 38% on the original MUGA scan of 10/10/10. The images were reviewed and a new region of interest of the systolic and diastolic images

were used to calculate the ejection fraction. The new ejection fraction was calculated at 48%. However, cine images continued to show mild decreased global hypokinesis.

On November 28, 2010, Claimant complained of chest pain after starting chemotherapy. X-rays of his chest showed mild atelectasis, left base, with an elevated left diaphragm.

On February 3, 2011, a PET scan revealed interval resolution of previously noted left facial skin thickening and increased activity. There was no evidence of metastatic lymph nodes in the head/neck, chest, abdomen, or pelvis. There was diffuse increased skeletal bone marrow activity, likely due to the effect of chemotherapy.

On May 28, 2011, a CT scan of the chest, abdomen and pelvis with IV and oral contrast with 2D coronal reconstructed imaging obtained on an independent workstation showed no evidence for active disease in the chest, abdomen or pelvis. A CT examination of the neck found no evidence of developing enlarging lymph node in either side of neck suggesting a recurrence of known lymphoma.

On January 28, 2012, a CT scan of Claimant's chest, abdomen and pelvis demonstrated a bulging disc at L5-S1, with some foraminal stenosis. Otherwise, no evidence to suggest active disease in the chest, abdomen, or pelvis, nor change from the previous study on 5/28/11.

On February 7, 2012, Claimant underwent a medical examination on behalf of the department. Claimant was diagnosed with Non Hodgkin's lymphoma Stage 4. Treatment was completed on 3/8/11. No current evidence of disease. He is under a rheumatologist care for pain medication. He has bilateral tingling with no gross deficits and is anxious at times. The examining physician opined that Claimant's condition was stable.

As previously noted, Claimant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairment(s). In the present case, Claimant testified that he had non-Hodgkin's lymphoma specifically diffuse large B-cell lymphoma Stage IV, nerve damage from chemotherapy, bulging disc at L5-S1, foraminal stenosis and numbness in his right leg. While the evidence does show Claimant did have non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, the current medical evidence shows no evidence of the disease. In addition, no medical evidence was submitted to support nerve damage from the chemotherapy. Based on the lack of objective medical evidence that the alleged impairment(s) are severe enough to reach the criteria and definition of disability, Claimant is denied at step 2 for lack of a severe impairment and no further analysis is required.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds the Claimant not disabled for purposes of the MA-P benefit program.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED:

The Department's determination is **AFFIRMED**.

/s/
Vicki L. Armstrong
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: October 1, 2012

Date Mailed: October 1, 2012

NOTICE: Administrative Hearings may order a rehearing or reconsideration on either its own motion or at the request of a party within 30 days of the mailing date of this Decision and Order. Administrative Hearings will not order a rehearing or reconsideration on the Department's motion where the final decision cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request.

The Claimant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the mailing of the Decision and Order or, if a timely request for rehearing was made, within 30 days of the mailing date of the rehearing decision.

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