

SUMMARY STATEMENT
Proulx v. Saveway Market, Inc.
Docket No. 51856-2024

Shasta Proulx appealed from an order of the Idaho Industrial Commission denying her request for benefits associated with a herniated nucleus pulposus at the C6-7 level. Proulx was employed at Saveway Market, Inc., when she suffered an injury while carrying a heavy box. Proulx complained of shoulder and neck pain, was diagnosed with a shoulder strain, and received treatment over roughly six months. When Proulx's symptoms did not fully resolve, Saveway's surety requested an independent medical examination. Dr. John Vallin performed the examination and opined that Proulx had likely suffered a strain that did not require additional treatment. The surety then notified Proulx that she would receive partial disability benefits but would no longer receive temporary disability or medical benefits.

Proulx filed a complaint with the Commission and sought an evaluation from another healthcare provider, Dr. Benjamin Blair. Dr. Blair opined that Proulx's persisting symptoms were caused by a bulging disc in her cervical spine that was either caused or aggravated by the workplace accident. He believed that Proulx required surgical treatment to repair her cervical spine.

The surety then requested another independent medical examination, which was performed by Dr. Lynn Stromberg. Dr. Stromberg opined that Proulx's cervical spine had only mild, degenerative abnormalities that were not causally attributable to her accident and would not explain her reported symptoms. Dr. Stromberg agreed with Dr. Vallin that Proulx had likely suffered a strain that did not require any additional medical care and discouraged any invasive surgical interventions.

Following a hearing, the Commission found Dr. Vallin and Dr. Stromberg to be more persuasive than Dr. Blair and determined that Proulx failed to establish that the workplace accident caused an injury to her neck and failed to establish that surgical intervention was reasonable. Proulx appealed and argued that the Commission's findings were clearly erroneous. She also argued that the Commission made improper credibility determinations, discounting Dr. Blair's testimony and her own reports regarding the nature and severity of her symptoms.

The Idaho Supreme Court affirmed the Commission's decision. It held that substantial and competent evidence, in the form of Dr. Vallin's and Dr. Stromberg's opinions, supported the Commission's decision. It further held that the Commission was entitled to weigh competing testimony, and did not err by finding the opinions of Dr. Vallin and Dr. Stromberg to be more persuasive than that of Dr. Blair.

This summary constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court, but has been prepared by court staff for the convenience of the public.