

APPEAL NO. 011442
FILED AUGUST 10, 2001

This appeal arises pursuant to the Texas Workers' Compensation Act, TEX. LAB. CODE ANN. § 401.001 *et seq.* (1989 Act). A contested case hearing (CCH) was held on June 11, 2001. The issues before the hearing officer were extent of injury and disability. With regard to these issues, the hearing officer determined that the appellant's (claimant herein) compensable injury of _____, did not extend to include carpal tunnel syndrome or a fracture to the third and fourth fingers of the right hand. The hearing officer also determined that the claimant did not have disability from _____, through the date of the CCH. The claimant files a request for review arguing that the evidence was contrary to these determinations. The respondent (carrier herein) replies that the decision of the hearing officer should be affirmed.

DECISION

Finding sufficient evidence to support the decision of the hearing officer and no reversible error in the record, we affirm the decision and order of the hearing officer.

The hearing officer outlined the evidence and the rationale for her decision in her written decision. There was conflicting evidence as to the issues of extent of injury and disability. Both of these issues are issues of fact. Section 410.165(a) provides that the contested case hearing officer, as finder of fact, is the sole judge of the relevance and materiality of the evidence as well as of the weight and credibility that is to be given the evidence. An appeals-level body is not a fact finder and does not normally pass upon the credibility of witnesses or substitute its own judgment for that of the trier of fact, even if the evidence would support a different result. National Union Fire Insurance Company of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania v. Soto, 819 S.W.2d 619, 620 (Tex. App.-El Paso 1991, writ denied). When reviewing a hearing officer's decision for factual sufficiency of the evidence we should reverse such decision only if it is so contrary to the overwhelming weight of the evidence as to be clearly wrong and unjust. Cain v. Bain, 709 S.W.2d 175, 176 (Tex. 1986); Pool v. Ford Motor Co., 715 S.W.2d 629, 635 (Tex. 1986). Applying this standard, we perceive no error on the part of the hearing officer.

The decision and order of the hearing officer are affirmed.

Gary L. Kilgore
Appeals Judge

CONCUR:

Susan M. Kelley
Appeals Judge

Philip F. O'Neill
Appeals Judge