

No. 1-25-1986WC

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IN THE
APPELLATE COURT OF ILLINOIS
FIRST DISTRICT
WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION DIVISION

JASON BOWDEN,	)	Appeal from the
	)	Circuit Court of
	)	Cook County.
Appellant,	)	
	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 24-L-50083
	)	
	)	
THE ILLINOIS WORKERS' COMPENSATION	)	
COMMISSION <i>et al.</i>	)	Honorable
	)	John A. Simon,
(Wilbur Wright College, Appellee).	)	Judge, Presiding.

JUSTICE BARBERIS delivered the judgment of the court.
Presiding Justice Holdridge and Justices Rochford, Mullen, and Cavanagh
concurred in the judgment.

ORDER

¶ 1 *Held:* We affirm the circuit court's confirmation of the Commission's denial of benefits where the Commission's finding that claimant failed to meet his burden of proof to show causation was not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 2 Claimant, Jason Bowden, appeals from an order of the circuit court of Cook County, confirming the decision of the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission (Commission) denying him benefits under the Workers' Compensation Act (Act) (820 ILCS 305/1 *et seq.* (West 2022)) for alleged repetitive trauma injuries sustained while working for employer, Wilbur Wright College. On appeal, claimant argues that the Commission erred by finding (1) that claimant did not meet his burden of proof to show causation (2) that claimant failed to show a manifestation date for his repetitive trauma injury, and (3) that claimant failed to show that he gave timely notice of his injury. For the following reasons, we affirm

¶ 3 I. BACKGROUND

¶ 4 The following evidence was adduced at the January 12, 2023, arbitration hearing held on claimant's application for adjustment of claim filed pursuant to the Act.

¶ 5 Claimant testified that he worked as a project janitor for employer. He started in February 2011 as a temporary janitor before becoming a full-time janitor following a 90-day probationary period. Shortly thereafter, in June 2011, he became a project janitor. Claimant explained that project janitors do much of the same work as standard janitors ("sweeping, vacuuming, dusting, wiping down"), but also do more intensive work like moving furniture; buffing, stripping, and waxing floors; using scrubbers, pressure washers, and floor strippers; and cleaning the pool area, gym, and locker rooms.

¶ 6 Claimant testified that his work "picked up more intensely" following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, because students were not present on campus. Normally, the janitors would only perform major work on one building during brief breaks when students were not present. However, during the pandemic, the janitors moved from project to project in each building without the breaks that naturally occurred when students were on campus for school. Claimant testified that, during this period, work involved "[a] lot more lifting furniture" like chairs,

cabinets, and “huge heavy desks” that required a team lift. His work involved “a lot of lifting and bending” and “pushing and carrying stuff.”

¶ 7 Beginning in March 2020, claimant began feeling low back pain. He “thought it was just a simple back spasm” and attempted to work through it. However, on May 24, 2021, claimant sought treatment for his back pain from his primary care provider, Dr. Gayathri Sundaresan. He reported experiencing right side lumbago for six to eight weeks, and that he attempted to alleviate it with over-the-counter treatments. He denied that any specific incident caused the pain. Dr. Sundaresan diagnosed sciatica and prescribed Valium and Motrin. Claimant never filled the Valium prescription.

¶ 8 Claimant returned to Dr. Sundaresan on July 22, 2021, continuing to complain of right-sided sciatica. Dr. Sundaresan ordered claimant to begin physical therapy. Claimant returned to Dr. Sundaresan on August 20, 2021, after physical therapy did not help his pain. Dr. Sundaresan took claimant off work. Claimant testified that Dr. Sundaresan told him that “work is causing [his] pain to become more painful. That’s when [he] knew it was a work-related injury.” On August 20, 2021, claimant provided Dr. Sundaresan’s off-work order to employer’s human resources director. A few days later, Dr. Sundaresan ordered an MRI of claimant’s lumbar spine and referred him to neurosurgeon Dr. Jerrel Boyer.

¶ 9 On August 24, 2021, claimant reported to Dr. Boyer. Claimant told Dr. Boyer his pain had been present for about one year and that it was not caused by a particular injury. Dr. Boyer diagnosed claimant with a lumbar disc herniation. Dr. Boyer discussed either shots or surgery for claimant, and claimant chose the latter hoping it would be a more permanent solution. Dr. Boyer recommended a right side L4-L5 discectomy. Claimant underwent surgery on September 24, 2021.

¶ 10 On November 3, 2021, claimant called Dr. Sundaresan and stated he was not ready to return to work. On November 9, 2021, claimant reported to Dr. Boyer who gave claimant new work

restrictions and ordered more physical therapy. On December 28, 2021, claimant returned to Dr. Boyer and informed him that his back pain “flared up” with activities over the holiday. Dr. Boyer instructed him to finish physical therapy and released him to light-duty work on January 3, 2022.

¶ 11 Claimant returned to work on January 4, 2022. Claimant testified that he has intermittent pain when performing work duties. He has neither returned to physical therapy nor seen Dr. Sundaresan since December 2021. Claimant last reported to Dr. Boyer on March 15, 2022, when he reported intermittent low back pain and occasional nerve pain in the right calf.

¶ 12 On February 16, 2022, claimant reported to Dr. Carl Graf for an independent medical examination requested by employer. Claimant informed Dr. Graf that his back pain started in March 2020 when he was moving furniture and stripping floors for employer because there were no students on campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Claimant tried to work through the pain until it progressed down the right posterior side into his buttock, calf, and foot.

¶ 13 Claimant testified that injuries were to be reported to the director of auxiliary services, Anna Marie Morales. Claimant acknowledged that between March 2020 and July 25, 2021, he never reported a work injury to employer. Claimant testified that he was promoted to group leader in April 2022.

¶ 14 Anna Marie Morales then testified on behalf of employer. Morales testified that she worked for employer for a total of 16 years and as the director of auxiliary services for over 3 years. As director, Morales oversaw facilities, the copy center, janitorial, and shipping and receiving. She was claimant’s direct supervisor. Morales testified that a project janitor “does everything above what a regular janitor does, according to the Collective Bargaining Agreement” and functions as a “jack-of-all-trades.”

¶ 15 Morales testified that if an injury is reported, the reporting party is initially directed to the department of safety and security to complete a report. Morales identified an incident report dated

July 26, 2021. In the report, claimant informed security that “since March 2021, [claimant] has been doing strenuous, labor intensive work around the Campus.” The report listed tasks: “carrying furniture, boxes and other various heavy items,” “stripping floors, cutting grass and other landscaping activities that required [claimant] to kneel down for lengthy periods of time.” The report indicated that claimant developed pain and soreness from the middle of his back, and down his right leg to his foot. The report listed the date and time of the incident as March 1, 2021, to July 25, 2021. Morales testified that claimant never complained of this pain to her during that time period and never reported seeing physicians.

¶ 16 Morales then testified that claimant never performed the tasks listed in the report during that time period. Morales denied that claimant lifted heavy items or furniture, stripped floors, or did landscaping requiring kneeling during the time period of March 1, 2021, to July 25, 2021. Morales indicated that claimant only mowed grass with an automatic push mower during the time period.

¶ 17 Morales then identified a Workers’ Compensation Initial Medical Report completed by claimant. In the report, the incident date range was March 2020 to July 2021. The incident description stated, “Strenuous lifting heavy objects, bending continuously[,] stripping floors through the entire campus caused back pain, right side nerve damage (sciatica).” Morales testified that between March 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021, claimant never reported complaints of pain or that he had been seeing physicians for the pain.

¶ 18 Morales next identified a Workers’ Compensation Supervisor’s Report that she completed on August 24, 2021. Morales listed claimant’s job duties as “moving furniture, windows, floor rider, outside grounds, floor scrubbing/waxing.” She testified that these were within the scope of claimant’s employment, not that the indicated job duties caused claimant’s back pain. Morales also completed a Workers’ Compensation Demand of Job form which identified claimant’s job duties

as “mopping/waxing, moving furniture, clean windows, floor rider, outside grounds, duties as assigned.” Morales also indicated that claimant’s job required him to lift 50 pounds at least five times per day. However, Morales denied that claimant ever had to lift that much weight and that the 50-pounds requirement was a minimum job requirement pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement. She testified that the heaviest weight claimant would have to lift during the time period of March 2020 to August 20, 2021, was 30 pounds.

¶ 19 Morales then identified a Workers’ Compensation Employee Notice of Injury form completed by claimant. On the form, claimant identified March 2020 as the date of injury. Claimant listed his duties as “removing furniture, stripping and waxing floors all over the campus,” “pushing and pulling heavy objects, bending continuously at a pace to finish by a deadline.” Morales testified that in March 2020 claimant was not removing furniture, stripping and waxing floors, pushing and pulling heavy objects, or bending continuously because the buildings were empty and no projects were taking place. Morales indicated that she “had one janitor scheduled for every two weeks” in March 2020 and eventually increased to twice every two weeks. She deliberately “encourag[ed] a little bit of [a] slower work pace” to ensure enough work would be available and there would not be any layoffs. She estimated that from March 2020 to June 2020 claimant worked 12 shifts.

¶ 20 Dr. Gayathri Sundaresan testified via evidence deposition on July 25, 2022. Dr. Sundaresan is a board-certified internist working as a primary care physician for Union Health Services. Claimant had been under her care since 2017. Dr. Sundaresan testified consistent with her medical records from May 24, 2021, to November 3, 2021, and consistent with claimant’s own testimony of his treatment. Claimant’s MRI indicated a significant nerve impingement at the L4-L5 level. Dr. Sundaresan urgently referred claimant to a neurosurgeon, Dr. Boyer. On August 30, 2021, she examined and medically cleared claimant for surgery. Dr. Sundaresan testified that claimant

contacted her office on November 3, 2021, stating that he was not ready to return to work. She did not see claimant because he followed up with Dr. Boyer.

¶ 21 Dr. Sundaresan opined in a written note that, in her medical opinion, “the nature of [claimant’s] work in janitorial services with heavy lifting, pushing, and carrying significantly impacted his medical and ultimately surgical condition.” Dr. Sundaresan testified that she reached this opinion after assuming claimant’s job duties because she has treated other patients in janitorial and maintenance services. She acknowledged that she never reviewed a description of claimant’s job duties and that she did not review claimant’s complete medical records.

¶ 22 Dr. Jerrel Boyer testified via evidence deposition on August 18, 2022. Dr. Boyer is a board-certified neurosurgeon with the Neuroscience and Comprehensive Spine Center at Illinois Masonic Medical Center. Dr. Boyer testified consistent with his medical records from August 24, 2021, to March 15, 2022, and consistent with claimant’s own testimony of his treatment. Dr. Boyer released claimant to light-duty work on January 3, 2022. At his March 15, 2022, visit with Dr. Boyer, claimant reported occasional nerve pain in the right calf that resolved after stretching.

¶ 23 Dr. Boyer opined that claimant “injured his back at work resulting in a need for surgery.” He acknowledged that he did not review claimant’s complete medical records. Dr. Boyer never reviewed a description of claimant’s job duties, but he recalled that claimant reported lifting “heavy boxes.”

¶ 24 On February 16, 2022, Dr. Carl Graf performed an independent medical examination on claimant, and his report was introduced into evidence. Claimant reported that his pain began in March 2020 while he was moving furniture and stripping floors. Claimant tried to work through what he first considered to be a “simple back ache” but sought treatment and surgery after the pain progressed to his back, leg, and foot. Dr. Graf noted that claimant sought treatment 17 months after March 2020. Dr. Graf diagnosed claimant with “right-sided disc herniation at L4-L5 with lateral

recess stenosis now status post lumbar decompression.” Dr. Graf noted that claimant reports a “resolution of his radiculopathy” and has “done well.” Dr. Graf opined that he was “unable to causally connect [claimant’s] diagnosis with the claimed [injury] in question.” On October 7, 2022, Dr. Graf authored an addendum report after reviewing additional medical records in which he further opined that he could not causally connect claimant’s diagnosis with work-related repetitive trauma.

¶ 25 On March 20, 2023, the arbitrator issued his decision. The arbitrator noted, “In a repetitive trauma case, issues of accident and causation are intertwined,” and the “date of the accident in a repetitive trauma case is the date the injury ‘manifests itself.’ ” The arbitrator found:

“Petitioner testified that he did not sustain a single accident or acute trauma at work; rather his condition occurred over time, thereby pursuing a claim based upon a repetitive trauma theory. Though Arbitrator believes that Petitioner testified to the best of his recollection, Petitioner’s medical records, reports of injury and testimony provide an unclear timeline as to when his initial complaints of back pain began, what caused the alleged back pain and when he realized the back pain was caused by his work duties. These inconsistencies make it difficult for the Arbitrator from delineating a discrete point when the injury and its causal relationship to Petitioner’s employment would be plainly apparent to a reasonable person. For those reasons Arbitrator finds Petitioner failed to meet his burden in regards to accident.”

¶ 26 The arbitrator found that claimant failed to “establish an accident that manifested at work on August 20, 2021” because of claimant’s “unclear” timeline and alleged mechanisms of injury. The arbitrator further found that the opinions of Drs. Sundaresan and Boyer were “concluded with assumptions, speculation, based on a review of partial-but-incomplete medical records.” The arbitrator thus “g[ave] little weight to their opinions.” The arbitrator found that timely notice was not given to employer. The arbitrator concluded that, because of his findings as to accident, notice, and causation, all remaining issues were moot.

¶ 27 On January 22, 2024, the Commission affirmed and adopted the decision of the arbitrator. On September 2, 2025, the circuit court of Cook County confirmed the Commission’s decision.

Claimant timely appealed.

¶ 28

II. ANALYSIS

¶ 29 On appeal, claimant argues that the Commission erred by finding (1) that claimant did not meet his burden of proof to show causation (2) that claimant failed to show a manifestation date for his repetitive trauma injury, and (3) that claimant failed to show that he gave timely notice of his injury. Claimant specifically argues that medical testimony meets the burden of proof for causation; the manifestation date is August 20, 2021, when Dr. Sundaresan told claimant his injury was related to his work; and that claimant's actions in informing employer's human resource director provided timely notice. We affirm the Commission's finding on causation. As discussed below, due to our finding on causation, we need not address claimant's arguments regarding manifestation date and notice.

¶ 30 For an injury to be compensable under the Act, it must be one "arising out of and in the course of the employment." 820 ILCS 305/1(d) (West 2022). "The 'arising out of' component is primarily concerned with causal connection." *Tazewell County v. Illinois Workers' Compensation Comm'n*, 2025 IL App (4th) 230754WC, ¶ 23 (citing *McAllister v. Illinois Workers' Compensation Comm'n*, 2020 IL 124848, ¶ 36). An injury arises out of one's employment if it originates from a risk connected with, or incidental to, the employment, so as to create a causal connection between the employment and the accidental injury. *Baggett v. Industrial Comm'n*, 201 Ill. 2d 187, 194 (2002). The "in the course of" component concerns an injury that occurs during employment, at a place where the employee may reasonably perform employment duties, and while a worker fulfills those duties or engages in some incidental employment duties. *Cronk v. Illinois Workers' Compensation Comm'n*, 2024 IL App (1st) 221878WC, ¶ 20. Whether a claimant's injury arose out of his or her employment is a question of fact to be resolved by the Commission, whose finding will not be disturbed unless it is against the manifest weight of the evidence. *McAllister*, 2020 IL

124848, ¶ 30. The Commission's factual findings are against the manifest weight of the evidence only when an opposite conclusion is clearly apparent, that is, when no rational trier of fact could agree with the Commission. *Id.*

¶ 31 “A repetitive-trauma injury is one which ‘has been shown to be caused by the performance of the claimant’s job and has developed gradually over a period of time, without requiring complete dysfunction.’ ” *PPG Industries v. Illinois Workers’ Compensation Comm’n*, 2014 IL App (4th) 130698WC, ¶ 19 (quoting *Peoria County Belwood Nursing Home v. Industrial Comm’n*, 115 Ill. 2d 524, 529 (1987)). A claimant who alleges a repetitive-trauma injury must meet the same standard of proof as a claimant who alleges an injury arising from a single identifiable event. *Durand v. Industrial Comm’n*, 224 Ill. 2d 53, 64 (2006); *Williams v. Industrial Comm’n*, 244 Ill. App. 3d 204, 209 (1993). When claiming a repetitive-trauma injury, a claimant must identify a date within the limitations period on which the injury manifested itself. *Durand*, 224 Ill. 2d at 67. A repetitive-trauma injury is considered to have manifested itself on “the date on which both the fact of the injury and the causal relationship of the injury to the claimant’s employment would have become plainly apparent to a reasonable person.” *Peoria County Belwood Nursing Home*, 115 Ill. 2d at 531. A claimant must establish a causal relationship between the condition of ill-being and his employment. *Sisbro, Inc. v. Industrial Comm’n*, 207 Ill. 2d 193, 205 (2003). “[I]n the cases relying on the repetitive trauma concept, the claimant generally relies on medical testimony establishing a causal connection between the work performed and claimant’s disability.” *Nunn v. Illinois Industrial Comm’n*, 157 Ill. App. 3d 470, 477 (1987). The Commission is not bound by unrebutted medical testimony. *Fickas v. Industrial Comm’n*, 308 Ill. App. 3d 1037, 1042 (1999). “ ‘Expert opinions must be supported by facts and are only as valid as the facts underlying them.’ ” *Gross v. Illinois Workers’ Compensation Comm’n*, 2011 IL App (4th) 100615WC, ¶ 24 (quoting *In re Joseph S.*, 339 Ill. App. 3d 599, 607 (2003)). “If the basis of an expert’s opinion is

grounded in guess or surmise, it is too speculative to be reliable.” *Id.*

¶ 32 Whether an employee’s condition of ill-being is causally connected to a work-related accident is a question of fact. *National Freight Industries v. Illinois Workers’ Compensation Comm’n*, 2013 IL App (5th) 120043WC, ¶ 26. “[I]t is the Commission’s province to assess the credibility of witnesses, draw reasonable inferences from the evidence, determine what weight to give testimony, and resolve conflicts in the evidence.” *Shafer v. Illinois Workers’ Compensation Comm’n*, 2011 IL App (4th) 100505WC, ¶ 38. The Commission’s decision will not be disturbed unless it is against the manifest weight of the evidence. *Westin Hotel v. Industrial Comm’n*, 372 Ill. App. 3d 527, 538 (2007).

¶ 33 Here, claimant contends that the Commission erred in finding that he did not meet his burden of proof for causation. Claimant contends the evidence proves that his back pain is causally connected to his duties as a project janitor for employer. Claimant argues that both Drs. Sundaresan and Boyer credibly opined that claimant’s work caused his pain and that Dr. Graf did not rebut this conclusion. Claimant further argues that Dr. Sundaresan and Dr. Boyer’s opinions are supported by their medical training and experience treating other janitors. Based upon our deferential standard, we conclude that the Commission’s decision was not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 34 The Commission, in affirming and adopting the arbitrator’s decision, based its causation finding upon claimant’s “unclear timeline and alleged mechanisms of injury,” and its own credibility determinations and weighing of evidence from the reports and testimonies of claimant, Anna Morales, Dr. Sundaresan, Dr. Boyer, and Dr. Graf. The Commission noted that between March 2020—when claimant allegedly first felt pain—and July 25, 2021, claimant never reported to his doctors that his pain related to his work. The Commission detailed that claimant reported to Dr. Sundaresan on May 24, 2021, that his pain had been present for six to eight weeks. Claimant

informed Dr. Boyer on August 24, 2021, that he had been in pain for about one year, or “since August 2020.” On August 3, 2021, claimant told his physical therapist he thought he initially injured his back lifting an object at work in March 2020. Claimant denied saying this. Claimant told Dr. Graf that his pain began in March 2020 after moving furniture and stripping floors.

¶ 35 The Commission also detailed claimant’s timeline as reported in the forms he filled out for employer. In the security incident form, claimant listed a timeline as between March 1, 2021, and July 21, 2021. In the Workers’ Compensation Initial Medical Report completed by claimant, the incident date range was March 2020 to July 2021. In the Workers’ Compensation Employee Notice of Injury form completed by claimant, he identified March 2020 as the date of injury. The Commission noted, “Despite the many dates of the accident mentioned above, [claimant’s] Application for Adjustment of Claim listed his date of accident/manifestation date as August 20, 2021” when claimant was taken off work by Dr. Sundaresan. In sum, it is unclear from the evidence when claimant began experiencing back pain, given that some evidence indicates the pain began in March 2020 and other evidence indicates that the pain began over a year later in March 2021.

¶ 36 The Commission then compared claimant’s reported work activity with the testimony of his supervisor, Morales. In his written forms, reports to his doctors, and testimony at the arbitration hearing, claimant variously described the tasks he performed during his claimed period of injury as including strenuous, labor-intensive work around the campus; carrying furniture, boxes, and other heavy items; stripping floors; cutting grass and other landscaping activities that required claimant to kneel down for lengthy periods of time; repeatedly lifting heavy objects and bending; removing furniture; stripping and waxing floors all over the campus; pushing and pulling heavy objects and continuously bending while working at a pace to finish by a deadline. Morales indicated the following as duties expected of a project janitor: “mopping/waxing, moving furniture, clean windows, floor rider, outside grounds, duties as assigned.” Morales also indicated

that claimant's job required him to be able to lift 50 pounds at least five times per day. However, Morales denied that claimant actually had to lift 50 pounds in performing his job, explaining that the 50-pound requirement was a minimum job requirement pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement. She testified that during the time period of March 2020 to August 20, 2021, the heaviest weight claimant would have to lift was 30 pounds.

¶ 37 The Commission highlighted that Morales denied that claimant performed any of his claimed tasks during the dates the alleged injury manifested. Morales denied that claimant did anything besides cutting grass with an automatic push mower. Morales testified that she deliberately slowed the pace of work and halted projects to avoid layoffs. She estimated that claimant worked 12 shifts from March 2020 to June 2020. The Commission expressly found Morales's testimony "to be credible as she indicated she interacted with [claimant] every day." It follows that the Commission found that claimant's testimony that he performed more work than usual during the COVID-19 pandemic lacked credibility.

¶ 38 Lastly, the Commission found that "the opinions expressed by Dr. Sundaresan and Dr. Boyer were concluded with assumptions, speculation, [and were] based on a review of partial-but-incomplete medical records." The Commission cited *Gross*, 2011 IL App (4th) 100615WC, ¶ 24 ("If the basis of an expert's opinion is grounded in guess or surmise, it is too speculative to be reliable."). Claimant rebuts that the doctors' opinions were supported by their medical training and experience treating janitors.

¶ 39 Dr. Sundaresan opined that "the nature of [claimant's] work in janitorial services with heavy lifting, pushing, and carrying significantly impacted his medical and ultimately surgical condition." Dr. Sundaresan testified that she reached this opinion after assuming claimant's job duties because she has treated other patients in janitorial and maintenance services. She acknowledged that she never reviewed a description of claimant's job duties and that she did not

review claimant's complete medical records. Dr. Boyer opined that claimant "injured his back at work resulting in a need for surgery." He acknowledged that he did not review claimant's complete medical records. Dr. Boyer never reviewed a description of claimant's job duties, but he recalled that claimant reported lifting "heavy boxes." Dr. Graf opined that he was "unable to causally connect [claimant's] diagnosis with the claimed [injury] in question." In his later addendum report, Dr. Graf further opined that he could not causally connect claimant's diagnosis with work-related repetitive trauma.

¶ 40 In reviewing the reports and testimonies of the medical professionals before it, the Commission found that "Dr. Sundaresan and Dr. Boyer's documented histories were incomplete as far as [claimant's] employment activities were concerned" and noted it "g[ave] little weight to their opinions." "[I]t is the Commission's province to assess the credibility of witnesses, draw reasonable inferences from the evidence, determine what weight to give testimony, and resolve conflicts in the evidence." *Shafer*, 2011 IL App (4th) 100505WC, ¶ 38. Claimant argues that, despite Dr. Graf's conclusions, the doctors' causation opinions were undisputed and that there was virtually no conflict in the medical testimony. However, even if disregarding Dr. Graf's reports, the Commission is not bound by unrebutted medical testimony. *Fickas*, 308 Ill. App. 3d at 1042. Here, the Commission did not arbitrarily reject the doctors' opinions. Instead, the Commission detailed the incomplete nature of the doctors' assessments where they did not have a full review of claimant's medical history and job duties. The Commission detailed this and chose to give the weight and credibility determinations that it did based upon that evidence. We therefore decline to substitute our judgment for that of the Commission's where the evidence supports the Commission's findings. *Sisbro*, 207 Ill. 2d at 206.

¶ 41 Both parties highlight *Williams v. Industrial Comm'n*, 244 Ill. App. 3d 204 (1993), as did the circuit court. We will therefore briefly discuss it. Employer relies on *Williams* to argue that,

unlike the claimants discussed in *Williams*, here, claimant failed to establish the specific repetitive tasks that caused his injury. Claimant rebuts that “undisputed medical expert testimony showed that [claimant’s] back injury was caused by the repetitive nature of his job as a janitor, and there was no evidence of a non-work related cause for his injury.” Claimant further argues that the repetitive tasks affecting the claimants discussed in *Williams* are similar to the tasks claimant was required to perform.

¶ 42 In *Williams*, the claimant alleged a repetitive-trauma cervical injury from his job as a millwright and crane operator but admitted he performed no single tasks on a regular or daily basis. *Id.* at 205. The court rejected claimant’s arguments where he could not establish an injurious repetitive job task that was performed daily. *Id.* at 211. The court distinguished the *Williams* claimant with claimants from other repetitive-trauma injury cases. In *Peoria County Belwood Nursing Home*, the claimant was required to lift laundry bags weighing between 25 and 50 pounds while loading and unloading large washing machines six times each day. *Peoria County Belwood Nursing Home*, 115 Ill. 2d at 530. In *Three “D” Discount Store*, the claimant was required to use two buffing machines to scrub, wax, and buff floors for six to eight hours each day. *Three “D” Discount Store v. Industrial Comm’n*, 198 Ill. App. 3d 43, 49 (1989). In *Oscar Mayer & Co.*, the claimant was required to perform repeated arm, shoulder, and hand movements in a hog slaughtering facility for 15 years. *Oscar Mayer & Co. v. Industrial Comm’n*, 176 Ill. App. 3d 607, 608 (1988). Lastly, in *Perkins Products Co.*, the claimant was required to perform the same movement of her body and arm every day to pack displays in cartons. *Perkins Products Co. v. Industrial Comm’n*, 379 Ill. 115, 117-18 (1942). The *Williams* court concluded that the claimant before it was distinguishable from the others because he “admitted there was not a single task he performed regularly or on a daily basis.” *Williams*, 244 Ill. App. 3d at 211.

¶ 43 Likewise, here, claimant did not establish a specific, daily, repetitive task that he performed

that could lead to a repetitive-trauma injury. In fact, the Commission did not find claimant's testimony credible regarding the tasks he performed during the time period in question. The Commission instead found Morales's testimony credible that claimant only push mowed grass and worked 12 shifts from March 2020 to June 2020. The Commission credited Morales's testimony that she slowed the pace of work during the COVID-19 pandemic to avoid layoffs. Claimant argues that the medical testimony established that his routine janitorial duties constitute sufficient evidence. However, the Commission rejected the medical testimony, because the doctors' opined based upon their assumptions of generalized janitorial duties. Repetitive-trauma cases generally rely upon medical testimony detailing a specific, repetitive task a claimant performs that can lead to a repetitive-trauma injury. *Nunn*, 157 Ill. App. 3d at 477. Here, the Commission discounted the credibility and sufficiency of claimant's medical testimony regarding causation. We decline to substitute our judgment for that of the Commission where the evidence supports the Commission's findings.

¶ 44 Issues of manifestation date and notice are derivative of causation. There must be a repetitive-trauma injury before manifestation or notice questions become relevant. Because we affirm on the issue of causation, we need not address claimant's remaining arguments regarding the manifestation date and notice. See *Borst v. Illinois Workers' Compensation Comm'n*, 2024 IL App (2d) 230124WC-U, ¶ 77. The remaining issues of medical expenses, temporary total disability, penalties, and the nature and extent of the injury remain moot.

¶ 45 III. CONCLUSION

¶ 46 For the reasons stated, the judgment of the circuit court of Cook County, confirming the decision of the Commission, is affirmed.

¶ 47 Affirmed.