

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
CENTRAL DIVISION**

DENEEN L. PAULO-ARELLANO,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 09-4118-SSA-CV-C-FJG
	)	
MICHAEL J. ASTRUE,	)	
Commissioner, Social Security	)	
Administration,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	

**ORDER**

This is a proceeding under Title II of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 401 et seq., and Title XVI of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1381 et seq., in which plaintiff requested review of the Commissioner’s decision denying her application for disability benefits and supplemental security income (SSI). Plaintiff’s claims were initially denied, and on July 23, 2007, following a hearing, an administrative law judge (ALJ) found plaintiff was not under a “disability” as defined in the Social Security Act, and denied all benefits. On April 29, 2009, the Appeals Council of the Social Security Administration denied plaintiff’s request for review. Thus, the ALJ’s decision stands as the final decision of the Commissioner. Plaintiff’s appeal is before the Court on plaintiff’s motion for judgment. The facts and arguments are presented in the parties’ briefs and will not be repeated here.

Section 205(g) of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), provides for judicial review of a “final decision” of the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration under Title II. Section 1631(c)(3) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1383(c)(3), provides for judicial

review to the same extent as the Commissioner's final determination under section 205. Judicial review of the Commissioner's final decision under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) is limited to whether there exists substantial evidence in the record as a whole to support the decision of the Commissioner. Siemers v. Shalala, 47 F.3d 299, 301 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1995). This determination requires review of the entire record, including both evidence in support of, and in opposition to, the Commissioner's decision. Fountain v. Railroad Retirement Bd., 88 F.3d 528, 530 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1996). The Court's role, however, is not to reweigh the evidence or try the issues de novo. Craig v. Chater, 943 F. Supp. 1184, 1188 (W.D. Mo. 1996) (citing McClees v. Shalala, 2 F.3d 301, 302 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1994)). When supported by substantial evidence, the Commissioner's findings are conclusive and must be affirmed. Richardson v. Perales, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971).

Substantial evidence is more than a mere scintilla but less than preponderance. It means such evidence that a reasonable mind would accept as adequate to support a conclusion. Johnson v. Chater, 108 F.3d 178, 179 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1997), citations omitted. The substantial evidence standard, however, presupposes a zone of choice within which the decision makers can go either way, without interference by the courts. Clarke v. Bowen, 843 F.2d 271, 272-73 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1988). "[A]n administration decision is not subject to reversal merely because substantial evidence would have supported an opposite decision." Id. Hence, "if it is possible to draw two inconsistent positions from the evidence and one of those positions represents the agency's finding, we must affirm the decision." Roe v. Chater, 92 F.3d 672, 672 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1996) (quoting Robinson v. Sullivan, 956 F.2d 836, 838 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1992)).

An individual claiming disability benefits has the burden of proving he or she is

unable to return to the type of work in which he or she was formerly engaged due to a medically determinable physical or mental impairment that has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than twelve months. 42 U.S.C. § 423(d) (1) (A). If the claimant succeeds, the burden of production shifts to the commissioner to establish that plaintiff can perform some other type of substantial gainful activity in the national economy. See Young v. Apfel, 221 F.3d 1065, 1069, n. 5 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2000); see also, 68 Fed. Reg. 51,153 - 51,163 (August 26, 2003); 20 C.F.R. § 404.1560(c)(2).

The Court has reviewed the parties' briefs and the record. As a result of that review, the Court agrees with the Commissioner's brief and finds that the record as a whole reflects substantial evidence to support the ALJ's decision. Like the ALJ, the Court acknowledges a certain degree of impairment to plaintiff's left hand, wrist, upper arm and neck; however as aptly stated by the government, "[t]he primary question is not whether Plaintiff actually experiences the subjective complaints alleged, but whether those symptoms are credible to the extent that they prevent her from performing substantial gainful activity." Hogan v. Apfel, 239 F.3d 958, 961 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2001). While plaintiff's pain may be tied to the identified impairment of cervical spondylosis with mild stenosis, none of the objective medical evidence in the record establishes such a connection, or other medically determinable cause. Thus, the ALJ's determination that plaintiff's residual functional capacity is limited to "light work" is supported by substantial evidence in the record.

Accordingly, it is **ORDERED** that plaintiff's claim, as stated in her brief is

**DENIED.** The decision of the ALJ is **AFFIRMED.**

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

Date: 06/14/10  
Kansas City, Missouri

**S/ FERNANDO J. GAITAN, JR.**  
Fernando J. Gaitan, Jr.  
Chief United States District Judge