

Non-Precedent Decision of the Administrative Appeals Office

MATTER OF R-J-N-

DATE: JULY 22, 2019

APPEAL OF NEBRASKA SERVICE CENTER DECISION

PETITION: FORM I-140, IMMIGRANT PETITION FOR ALIEN WORKER

The Petitioner, a surgeon and researcher, seeks classification as an individual of extraordinary ability in the sciences. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act) section 203(b)(1)(A), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(1)(A). This first preference classification makes immigrant visas available to those who can demonstrate their extraordinary ability through sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in their field through extensive documentation.

The Director of the Nebraska Service Center denied the Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, concluding that the Petitioner had satisfied only one of the ten initial evidentiary criteria, of which he must meet at least three.

On appeal, the Petitioner submits additional documentation and a brief, asserting that he fulfills at least three of the ten criteria and has demonstrated extraordinary ability.

Upon *de novo* review, we will dismiss the appeal.

I. LAW

Section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act makes visas available to immigrants with extraordinary ability if:

- (i) the alien has extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics which has been demonstrated by sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in the field through extensive documentation,
- (ii) the alien seeks to enter the United States to continue work in the area of extraordinary ability, and
- (iii) the alien's entry into the United States will substantially benefit prospectively the United States.

The term "extraordinary ability" refers only to those individuals in "that small percentage who have risen to the very top of the field of endeavor." $8 \text{ C.F.R.} \ 204.5(h)(2)$. The implementing regulation at $8 \text{ C.F.R.} \ 204.5(h)(3)$ sets forth two options for satisfying this classification's initial evidence requirements. First, a petitioner can demonstrate a one-time achievement (that is, a major, internationally recognized award). If the petitioner does not submit this evidence, then he or she must provide documentation that meets at least three of the ten categories listed at $8 \text{ C.F.R.} \ 204.5(h)(3)(i) - (x)$ (including items such as awards, published material in certain media, and scholarly articles). The regulation at $8 \text{ C.F.R.} \ 204.5(h)(4)$ allows a petitioner to submit comparable material if he or she is able to demonstrate that the standards at $8 \text{ C.F.R.} \ 204.5(h)(3)(i)-(x)$ do not readily apply to the individual's occupation.

Where a petitioner meets these initial evidence requirements, we then consider the totality of the material provided in a final merits determination and assess whether the record shows sustained national or international acclaim and demonstrates that the individual is among the small percentage at the very top of the field of endeavor. See Kazarian v. USCIS, 596 F.3d 1115 (9th Cir. 2010) (discussing a two-part review where the documentation is first counted and then, if fulfilling the required number of criteria, considered in the context of a final merits determination); see also Visinscaia v. Beers, 4 F. Supp. 3d 126, 131-32 (D.D.C. 2013); Rijal v. USCIS, 772 F. Supp. 2d 1339 (W.D. Wash. 2011). This two-step analysis is consistent with our holding that the "truth is to be determined not by the quantity of evidence alone but by its quality," as well as the principle that we examine "each piece of evidence for relevance, probative value, and credibility, both individually and within the context of the totality of the evidence, to determine whether the fact to be proven is probably true." Matter of Chawathe, 25 I&N Dec. 369, 376 (AAO 2010).

II. ANALYSIS

A. Evidentiary Criteria

Because the Petitioner has not indicated or established that he has received a major, internationally recognized award, he must satisfy at least three of the alternate regulatory criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i)-(x). In denying the petition, the Director determined that the Petitioner met only one of the initial evidentiary criteria, scholarly articles under 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(vi). The record supports a finding that the Petitioner meets the scholarly articles criterion. For example, the record reflects that the Petitioner has authored scholarly articles in professional publications such as *Brazilian Journal of Orthopedics* and *Journal of Spinal Disorders & Techniques*. Further, the evidence demonstrates that the Petitioner has participated as a judge of the work of others in his field under 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(iv) by serving as a member of the resident selection committee at Hospital evaluating candidates for admission into its orthopedics residency program. In addition, he provided documentation indicating that he has received a high salary relative to other orthopedists under 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(ix). As the Petitioner has demonstrated that he satisfies three criteria, we will evaluate the totality of the evidence in the context of the final merits determination below.

B. Final Merits Determination

As the Petitioner submitted the requisite initial evidence, we will evaluate whether he has demonstrated, by a preponderance of the evidence, his sustained national or international acclaim and that he is one of the small percentage at the very top of the field of endeavor, and that his achievements have been recognized in the field through extensive documentation. In a final merits determination, we analyze a petitioner's accomplishments and weigh the totality of the evidence to determine if his successes are sufficient to demonstrate that he has extraordinary ability in the field of endeavor. *See* section 203(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2), (3); *see also Kazarian*, 596 F.3d at 1119-20. In this matter, we determine that the Petitioner has not shown his eligibility.

The Petitioner indicates that he is a physician, medical consultant, and researcher specializing in the surgery. According to his curriculum vitae, the Petitioner attended fields of orthopedics and medical school at the University of (1997-2002), completed his orthopedic residency Medical School (2002-2008), and participated in an "Endoscopy and Minimally training at Invasive Surgery" fellowship at the Hospital in South Korea (2008-2009). Moreover, the Petitioner indicated that he worked as a preceptor doctor (2006-2016) and assistant professor (2009-2016) at _____Medical School, founder and director of ___ Clinic (2010-2016), and manager of the Orthopedics Department's Program at Hospital (2014-2016) in Brazil.² As mentioned above, the Petitioner judged others within the medical field, authored scholarly articles, and has commanded a high salary. The record, however, does not demonstrate that his achievements are reflective of a "career of acclaimed work in the field" as contemplated by Congress. H.R. Rep. No. 101-723, 59 (Sept. 19, 1990). Regarding his service as a judge of others, an evaluation of the significance of his experience is appropriate to determine if such evidence is indicative of the extraordinary ability required for this highly restrictive classification. See Kazarian, 596 F. 3d at 1121-22. As a member of the resident Hospital, the Petitioner evaluated candidates seeking admission selection committee at into the Orthopedics Department's residency program. Likewise, he participated in the selection of medical school graduates for entry into the residency at Medical School. While the Petitioner was involved in selecting candidates for residency programs at the medical institutions where he worked, the record does not show that such judging capacity is indicative of sustained national or international acclaim. See section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act. The evidence does not demonstrate, for instance, that he garnered wide attention from the field based on his service as an evaluator of residency candidates for his two employers. Nor has the Petitioner established that being given the role of evaluating residency candidates who are in the early stages of their career is reflective of extraordinary ability and sustained national or international acclaim at the very top of his field.

-

¹ See also USCIS Policy Memorandum PM 602-0005.1, Evaluation of Evidence Submitted with Certain Form I-140 Petitions; Revisions to the Adjudicator's Field Manual (AFM) Chapter 22.2, AFM Update AD11-14 4 (Dec. 22, 2010), https://www.uscis.gov/policymanual/HTML/PolicyManual.html (stating that USCIS officers should then evaluate the evidence together when considering the petition in its entirety to determine if the petitioner has established by a preponderance of the evidence the required high level of expertise of the immigrant classification).

² The Petitioner filed his Form I-140 in July 2018, but has not offered any records of his work experience or medical appointments after June 2016.

In addition, the Petitioner presented two certificates stating that he "participated as evaluator of the scientific works" for University's Medical Congress in 2009 and 2012. These certificates, however, did not provide information relating to whose work the Petitioner judged or the specific subject matter he evaluated.³

Here, the Petitioner has not established that the aforementioned instances of participation as a judge place him among the small percentage at the very top of his field. See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2). He has not shown, for example, how the number of evaluations or medical conferences he participated in compares to others at the top of the field. Furthermore, the record reflects that his participation as an evaluator occurred in 2009 and 2012. He did not demonstrate that these two instances contribute to a finding that he has a "career of acclaimed work in the field" as contemplated by Congress. H.R. Rep. No. at 59. Moreover, the record does not show the distinction of this conference coordinated by his medical institution or that his involvement was indicative of the required sustained national or international acclaim placing him among the small percentage at the very top of his field. See section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2).

Likewise, authorship of scholarly articles does not automatically place an individual at the top of their field. Here, the Petitioner presented evidence showing that he coauthored various research articles, medical case studies, and book chapters.⁴ However, the Petitioner has not demonstrated that this publication record is reflective of being among the small percentage at the very top of his field. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2). As authoring scholarly articles is often inherent to the work of medical researchers, the citation history or other evidence of the influence of his articles can be an indicator to determine the impact and recognition that his work has had on the field and whether such influence has been sustained. For example, numerous independent citations for an article authored by the Petitioner may provide solid evidence that his work has been recognized and that other researchers have been influenced by his work. *See Kazarian*, 596 F. 3d at 1122.

In this case, the Petitioner has not shown a level of interest in his published work from others in the field that is commensurate with sustained national or international acclaim. See section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act. While the record includes some evidence of citations to his research, the Petitioner did not show that these citations represent attention at a level consistent with being among small percentage at the very top of his field. See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2). The Petitioner, for instance, did not compare his citation statistics to others in his field of endeavor who are recognized as already being at the top

³ Participation in the peer review process does not automatically demonstrate that an individual has sustained national or international acclaim at the very top of his field. Without evidence that sets him apart from others in his field, such as evidence that he has a consistent history of completing a substantial number of review requests relative to others, served in editorial positions for distinguished journals or publications, or chaired technical committees for reputable conferences, the Petitioner has not established that his peer review experience places him among that small percentage at the very top of the field of endeavor. See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2).

in the field. Nor has the Petitioner otherwise demonstrated that his published work has garnered attention at a level indicative of sustained national or international acclaim.

In addition, although the Petitioner presented "average" wage information from Salario.com.br, Exame.abril.com.br, and Terra.com.br showing that he earns a salary that is well above average for orthopedists in Brazil, this information is not sufficient to demonstrate that his earnings are tantamount to those of an individual who is among that small percentage at the very top of the field of endeavor. See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2). Without sufficient information or evidence showing the full range of salaries for orthopedists, the Petitioner has not demonstrated that his earnings represent a level of compensation commensurate with sustained national or international acclaim. See section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act.

Beyond the three criteria that the Petitioner satisfied, for the reasons discussed below, we find that the additional evidence in the record neither fulfills the requirements of any further evidentiary criteria nor contributes to an overall finding that the Petitioner has sustained national or international acclaim and is among the small percentage of the top of his field.

Regarding the Petitioner's awards ⁵ , he presented letters from the Brazilian Society of Orthopedics and			
Traumatology (SBOT) stating that his article (entitled			
) received a "Best Poster Award" and a "Best Oral			
Theme Award" at the 39th in			
2007. In addition, the record includes information about SBOT from its web portal,			
including a 2018 announcement and welcome message for the 50th In addition			
the Petitioner provided a "Call for Papers" and "Paper Submission Guidelines" for the 50th			
from its website. The record also contains a brief announcement relating to "The Fifth Rio			
de Janeiro, 1942" printed in <i>Annals of Surgery</i> in 1942. ⁶ Furthermore.			
the Petitioner submitted a 2013 article in Acta Ortopedica Brasileira, entitled			
"The abstract for this <u>article</u> states:			
"OBJECTIVE: To quantify the publication rates of papers presented at the 2007			
CONCLUSION: The publication rate is lower than 30%. Many of the papers presented at the			
does not pass the scrutiny of scientific journals and therefore should not be the only source of			
scientific update" (Emphasis added).			
While the Petitioner presented information about the 5th and 50th from its organizers and a			
scientific article analyzing the publication rates of papers from the 39th (where he received his			
Best Poster and a Best Oral Theme awards), this evidence is not sufficient to demonstrate his awards			
from the 39th are nationally or internationally recognized prizes or awards for excellence in			
the field. In addition, even considering these awards from more than a decade ago, the Petitioner has			
not shown that they are indicative of sustained national or international acclaim or his status among			
the small percentage at the very top of his field.			

⁵ See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i).

⁶ This announcement contains an "Editor's Note" stating: "Unfortunately, we received the announcement of this meeting too late to include details of the program in our [1942] issue. However, in the interest of Medicine in South America, we are privileged to print the following outline of the Congress."

ne record
ogram is
lows will
r has not
specialty
eld. Nor
en to the
ember of gery, the Petitioner laws, this adged by termined fications. vements, top of the that limit does not expection
Estado de aude Em however, fessional either not Caruaru passing. by Radio out these
ed material shots from le, Similar Petitioner,

broadcasters, the record does not include sufficient evidence showing that the specific news programs or shows in which the Petitioner appeared constitute major media. Here, the Petitioner has not established that the aforementioned media coverage is reflective of his status as an individual who has garnered "sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in the field through extensive documentation." *See* section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act.

In regard to the Petitioner's contributions to the field 12, he contends that he "was the first surgeon to implement a minimally invasive procedure for surgery in Brazil." However, according to the article he provided in <i>Melhor Amiga</i> , this "technique was developed and improved by the neurosurgeon have been among the first to introduce s procedure in Brazil after receiving training in that technique during his fellowship in South Korea, the evidence does not show the Petitioner devised or substantially improved the aforementioned procedure, or that his specific work otherwise rises to the level of an original contribution of major significance in the field.
The record contains recommendation letters that summarize the Petitioner's medical training, experience in performing advanced surgical techniques, job responsibilities, and professional accomplishments, such as completing fellowships, presenting at conferences, and publishing articles and book chapters. For example, , chief professor of orthopedics and traumatology at Medical School, indicated that the Petitioner returned from his fellowship and "began to perform new procedures with innovative and less invasive techniques contributing to the care of our patients and passing on those techniques to our team of specialists in surgery, for instance image guided infiltration and microendoscopic by microscopy." The record, however, does not show that the Petitioner invented or remarkably advanced these medical techniques, that his particular surgical methods have affected the orthopedics field in a substantial way, or that his work otherwise constitutes contributions of major significance in the field.
In addition,

The recommendation letters offered by the Petitioner are insufficient to show that his achievements have been considered by the field to be of major significance. Moreover, they do not contain detailed information showing the unusual influence or high impact his contributions have had on the overall field. Letters that specifically articulate how a petitioner's contributions are of major significance to

¹² See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(v).

¹³ While we discuss a sampling of the recommendation letters, we have reviewed and considered each one.

the field and its impact on subsequent work add value. ¹⁴ On the other hand, letters that lack specifics and use hyperbolic language do not add value, and are not considered to be probative evidence that may form the basis for meeting original contributions of major significance in the field. ¹⁵ Here, the letters do not provide sufficient information and explanation, nor does the record include sufficient corroborating evidence, to show that the Petitioner is viewed by the overall field, rather than by a solicited few, as being among that small percentage at the very top of the field of endeavor. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2).

and

In addition, the Petitioner offered documentation indicating that he spoke at the 39th

presented a course at University of Sao Paulo. While this documentation demonstrates that the Petitioner's findings were shared with others and that he taught a course in his specialty, he has not established that his activities in-and-of-themselves show the major significance of his contributions. Further, the Petitioner has not established that the number of his conference presentations and course offerings is significant or demonstrates the required sustained national or international acclaim for this highly restrictive classification. See section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act.
With respect to his positions atMedical School andHospital, the Petitioner contends that his roles for these organizations were leading or critical. The record includes letters of support from and, chief and professor of surgery at
Hospital managing and developing the Treatment Project, initiating instructional programs, preparing treatment protocols, training residents, and mentoring specialists.
The Petitioner, however, has not demonstrated that his roles for Medical School and Hospital reflect his leading or critical role for these organizations overall. As it relates to a leading role, he did not provide evidence to establish where his positions fit within the overall hierarchy at Medical School or Hospital. Further, although the letters from discuss the Petitioner's projects in their
orthopedics departments, they do not indicate that his positions were leading or critical for the aforementioned medical school or hospital overall. In addition, their letters do not explain how the Petitioner's role was leading compared to these organizations' faculty or department heads, nor did their statements indicate that his work was of significant importance for Medical School and Hospital's success or standing so as to demonstrate a critical role. Furthermore, while the Petitioner provided evidence indicating that Hospital has a distinguished

¹⁴ See USCIS Policy Memorandum PM 602-0005.1, supra, at 8-9.

¹⁵ *Id.* At 9. *See also Kazarian*, 580 F.3d at 1036, aff'd in part 596 F.3d at 1115 (holding that letters the repeat the regulatory language but do not explain how an individual's contributions have already influenced the field are insufficient to establish original contributions of major significance in the field).

¹⁶ See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(viii).

reputation, the information fromM	edical School's website alone is not sufficient to show that
this school has earned a distinguished repu	utation. ¹⁷
Moreover, the Petitioner has not shown that	at his employment in the aforementioned roles was reflective
of, or resulted in, widespread acclaim from	n his field or was commensurate with being at the very top
of the field of endeavor. See 8 C.F.R. § 20	4.5(h)(2). Nor has the Petitioner demonstrated that his roles
at Medical School and	Hospital were representative of sustained national or
international acclaim or a "career of accla	simed work in the field." See section 203(b)(1)(A) of the
Act; H.R. Rep. No. at 59.	

The record as a whole, including the evidence discussed above, does not establish the Petitioner's eligibility for the benefit sought. The Petitioner seeks a highly restrictive visa classification, intended for individuals already at the top of their respective fields, rather than those progressing toward the top. USCIS has long held that even athletes performing at the major league level do not automatically meet the statutory standards for classification as an individual of "extraordinary ability." *Matter of Price*, 20 I&N Dec. 953, 954 (Assoc. Comm'r 1994). While the Petitioner need not establish that there is no one more accomplished to qualify for the classification sought, we find the record insufficient to demonstrate that he has sustained national or international acclaim and is among the small percentage at the top of his field. *See* section 203(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2).

III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons discussed above, the Petitioner has not demonstrated his eligibility as an individual of extraordinary ability. The appeal will be dismissed for the above stated reasons, with each considered as an independent and alternate basis for the decision. In visa petition proceedings, the petitioner bears the burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361; *Matter of Skirball Cultural Ctr.*, 25 I&N Dec. 799, 806 (AAO 2012). Here, that burden has not been met.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.

Cite as *Matter of R-J-N-*, ID# 3681821 (AAO July 22, 2019)

-

¹⁷ Organizations or establishments must be recognized as having a distinguished reputation, which is marked by eminence, distinction, or excellence. *See* USCIS Policy Memorandum PM 602-0005.1, supra, at 10-11.

¹⁸ In addition, the Petitioner has not offered any evidence of his medical positions or appointments after June 2016.