**Mark Snookal v. Chevron USA, Inc.**

**Case No. 2:23-CV-6302-HDV-AJR (U.S. District Court Central District of California)**

On August 25, 2025, an eight-person jury in the United States District Court for the Central District of California unanimously found in favor of Plaintiff Mark Snookal for his claim of disability discrimination against Defendant Chevron USA, Inc.

In May of 2019, after having built a career at Chevron for ten years, Mr. Snookal applied to be the Reliability Engineering Manager (REM) in a remote refinery location in Escravos, Nigeria. This was a Chevron expatriate assignment that would pay a 55% tax-free premium on top of Mr. Snookal’s base salary. The other main perk of the REM job was that the selected employee would work on a rotating schedule—they would spend approximately 28 days working in Escravos, Nigeria followed by 28 days off at home in the U.S., during which the selected employee would not be required to work.

Chevron offered Mr. Snookal the REM position on the condition that he pass a routine ‘fitness for duty’ exam. During the medical screening process, Mr. Snookal disclosed that he had a heart condition called a ‘dilated aortic root.’ Mr. Snookal was deemed “fit for duty with restrictions” by a doctor Chevron appointed to conduct the initial fitness for duty exam. The only noted restrictions were 1) no heavy lifting over 50 pounds, and 2) getting a clearance letter from his treating cardiologist. Chevron’s documents reflected that the REM job was an “office-based job” which required no heavy lifting. Mr. Snookal’s treating cardiologist promptly provided a letter indicating that it was “safe for Mr. Snookal to work in Nigeria.”

Despite this, physicians contracted to Chevron Nigeria Limited made a determination that Mr. Snookal was “not fit for duty” in Escravos, Nigeria, without having ever spoken to Mr. Snookal or any of his medical providers. These doctors surmised that Escravos was geographically too remote to ensure the proper management of Mr. Snookal’s condition *if*, in the unlikely event Mr. Snookal were to experience a complication of his condition while in Escravos, Nigeria. The Chevron doctors in Escravos claimed that evacuation to a medical facility could be a grave obstacle to treatment for Mr. Snookal, should he experience the worst-case scenario of his condition.

However, Mr. Snookal has, to date, managed his condition for 11 years without any complication, and he was at all times able to perform all of the essential duties of the REM job. He was widely considered to be at “low risk” of an adverse cardiac event because of the size of his dilated aortic root, and he had been able to perform his work at Chevron without incident both before and after his diagnosis. Mr. Snookal attempted to appeal the decision to Chevron USA’s medical team and to Human Resources internally, but they upheld the discriminatory decision.

After Chevron rescinded the job offer from Mr. Snookal, they also backfilled Mr. Snookal’s old role with another employee. After almost two years of trying to find other opportunities to advance his career, Mr. Snookal made the decision to resign after twelve years of employment with Chevron.

Chevron asserted the “direct threat” affirmative defense to disability discrimination, claiming that Mr. Snookal’s dilated aortic root “posed an immediate and substantial degree of risk to his health or safety or the health or safety of others.” Ultimately, the jury decided that Chevron failed to prove this defense.

In addition, California Code of Regulations Title 2, Section 11067(d) states that “it is no defense to assert that an individual with a disability has a condition or a disease with a *future risk*, so long as the condition or disease *does not presently interfere with his or her ability to perform the job* in a manner that will not endanger the individual with a disability or others.” The risk of Mr. Snookal experiencing a dissection or rupture of his aorta was a small risk that existed only in the future. At the time of Mr. Snookal’s application to the REM position in 2019, he was safely carrying out his job duties and successfully managing his disability.

Accordingly, the jury unanimously awarded Plaintiff Mark Snookal $4,000,000 in damages. Mr. Snookal was represented by Dolores Leal and Olivia Flechsig of Allred, Maroko & Goldberg.