



The Birmingham News

\$134.5 million levied in Wyeth drug case

Friday, October 12, 2007

SANDRA CHEREB
The Associated Press

RENO, Nev. - A jury levied a \$134.5 million judgment against pharmaceutical giant Wyeth in a lawsuit filed by three Nevada women who claimed the company's hormone replacement drugs caused their breast cancer.

It was the largest award to date against the Madison, New Jersey-based company, which faces about 5,300 similar lawsuits across the country in state and federal courts.

All involve the drugs Premarin, an estrogen replacement, and Prempro, a combination of estrogen and progestin. The drugs are prescribed to ease symptoms of menopause.

The panel deliberated for two days before announcing its verdict late Wednesday in favor of Jeraldine Scofield, 75, of Fallon; Arlene Rowatt, 67, of Incline Village; and Pamela Forrester, 64, of Yerington.

The same five-man, two-woman jury will return to the courtroom today to consider punitive damages against the drug maker.

"This verdict raises the stakes in Prempro litigation to a new level for Wyeth," said Brian Turner, a Birmingham-based lawyer who represents women suing the drugmaker over the medicines. "This verdict should get the attention of Wyeth's board and its shareholders."

Wyeth spokesman Doug Petkus on Thursday said the company would have no comment because the case was not finished. Washoe District Judge Robert Perry issued a gag order early in the proceedings.

In an e-mail to The Associated Press, Petkus said 20 similar cases have gone to trial or been otherwise resolved. Of those, he said three resulted in favor of the company, two plaintiff verdicts were set aside by the courts, and three cases were dismissed on summary judgment.

Twelve other cases were voluntarily dismissed by plaintiffs before trial, he said.

During the Reno trial, Wyeth lawyers argued that the drugs are safe and approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. They also said information about possible risks is included with every prescription.

They also argued that the women had other risk factors, making it impossible to link their cancer with the hormone replacement drugs.

All three women were awarded \$7.5 million in past damages. Jurors also awarded \$36 million each to Scofield and Rowatt for future damages and \$40 million to Forrester.

Bloomberg News contributed to this report.

© 2007 The Birmingham News

© 2007 al.com All Rights Reserved.