



More sign on to lawsuit

Wyeth Canada Inc.

Christine Wood/Staff Writer

April 7, 2012

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About 100 women have signed onto a class action lawsuit launched from Sechelt that alleges Wyeth Canada Inc. knowingly supplied a hormone replacement therapy drug called Premarin, which has been linked to breast cancer, between 1977 and 2003.

Sechelt resident Dianna Stanway filed the class action lawsuit that was officially certified by Madam Justice Miriam Gropper on Aug. 4, 2011 in B.C. Supreme Court. Earlier this year a hearing date was set for Sept. 9, 2013.

However on March 20, Wyeth Canada Inc. appealed the ruling by Gropper to certify the class action suit. Judges said they needed two to three weeks to come up with a ruling, but if the appeal is successful, the case won't make it to the 2013 hearing date.

"I got a letter from my lawyer and he said it was quite positive, but sitting in there watching the whole thing, you have no idea," Stanway said, noting she was at the appeal but did not speak.

She was joined in the courtroom by women from around the province who are now involved in the class action suit, including three other women from the Sunshine Coast.

"I was really surprised to meet some women from Roberts Creek there," Stanway said.

Gillian Kydd was one of the women present at the appeal. She said there are many women on the Coast who took Premarin and later suffered breast cancer.

"There are a lot of people on our dragon boat team who are in the same boat, quite a number of us," Kydd said.

She made the trip to Vancouver with two fellow dragon boaters, now part of the lawsuit, who wanted to see what Wyeth Canada Inc. had to say.

"In the morning, it was the drug company people who were speaking, and they were trying to pick holes in the previous judgment," Kydd said. "It was pretty surreal."

She was surprised how many women showed up to the appeal — so many, in fact, that the courtroom had to be changed to accommodate the expanded gallery.

"I was surprised how many of the women were from all over B.C. It wasn't just Vancouver, and they'd obviously put a lot of effort into coming," Kydd said.

She said there are five women on her Sunshine Dragons Abreast team who took Premarin and later suffered breast cancer, and she sees no reason why the lawsuit shouldn't advance.

"When you look at their statistics, how there was a 9.6 per cent drop in the rate [of breast cancer] after people started going off [Premarin], it's pretty obvious," Kydd said.

Stanway is pleased so many other women have become involved in the class action suit she started. She credits Coast Reporter for helping bring attention to the issue locally.

“My lawyer was surprised that six people from the peninsula signed on. He said if we had that many people applying to be a part of it in every place this size, they couldn’t handle the case it would be so big,” Stanway said. “I didn’t realize it was that big a deal, but I said the interest came from an article in Coast Reporter and nothing else.”

The class action lawsuit against Wyeth Canada Inc. is being handled by the law firm Klein Lyons. For more information or to join the suit, visit them at www.kleinlyons.com or call them at 1-604-975-7171.

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