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Judge certifies class-action lawsuit against hormone therapy drugmakers

BY NEAL HALL, VANCOUVER SUN AUGUST 6, 2011

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A judge has certified a class-action lawsuit involving a menopausal hormone replacement therapy drug linked to breast cancer.

The representative plaintiff, Dianna Louise Stanway, 65, who lives in Sechelt, began taking the drug Premarin in 1995 to reduce menopausal symptoms.

Her doctor prescribed reducing the dosage in 2002 and she stopped taking the drug in March 2003 after reading news reports linking it to breast cancer.

Two months later, she was diagnosed with ductal and lobular breast cancer.

B.C. Supreme Court Justice Miriam Gropper decided this week that Stanway's case met the criteria for classaction certification.

"She's very pleased that the case is moving forward," one of Stanway's lawyers, David Klein of Vancouver, said Friday.

His office issued a statement on behalf of Stanway, which said: "I never would have taken Premarin if I had been told of the risks. Fortunately, I won my battle with breast cancer. Not everyone is so lucky. I want my lawsuit to help all Canadian women, and their families, who have been harmed by this drug."

Klein said thousands of Canadian women took drugs for hormone replacement therapy.

Stanway's lawsuit, filed in 2004, was the only one filed in Canada, the lawyer said.

He estimated there may be hundreds if not thousands of women in B.C. who could join the class action.

Klein pointed out that similar lawsuits have been successfully tried in the U.S., resulting in repeated verdicts against the defendants and leading to

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3,300 settlements.

Pfizer Inc., which purchased the defendant companies Wyeth Canada Inc. and Wyeth Pharmaceuticals Inc. two years ago, has set aside \$772 million to resolve remaining U.S. claims.

nhall@vancouver.sun.com

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