

Forbe's writes, "Forget Bextra"

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By Michael Monheit, Esquire, Monheit Law, PC

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On November 10, 2004, according to Forbes Magazine, "Pfizer was blindsided as The New York Times reported information about a reanalysis of old data that say the drug giant's Bextra, which is similar to Merck's Vioxx, increased the risk of heart attacks and strokes."

However, one has to ask, how much of a blind side could it possibly be, when Pfizer receives that asdverse reports from doctors whose patients are having these side effects, such as heart attacks and strokes? Only time will tell how much Pfizer knew before. Looking back a month, Pfizer decided to update its warning. So it appears clear that they saw this coming.

While the link to strokes and heart attacks in all patients may not be clear at this point. It seems that it is only a matter of time. Forbes receommends that the "executives should start thinking about Bextra as a lost cause, partly because it will make it easier for the company to defend Celebrex, which is Bextra's chemical cousin and one of Pfizer's best-selling drugs."

Pfizer is sure to be pulled intot he mix as the FDA convenes a panel to look at all Cox-2 drugs. This may actually be a boon for Pfizer, who can narrow its focus on how Celebrex may be safer, as it does not take Cox-1 and Cox-2 as far out of balance with each other. It may be better, albeit having a greater risk of ulcers.

The information was release by Dr. Garret FitzGerald, a pharmacologist at the University of Pennsylvania, in a lecture he was giving here at the American Heart Association's annual meeting. However, it is not a detailed study, and only a retrospective looking back at data. Pfizer has already admitted that open heart surgery data showed an increased risk of heart attack and stroke in those patients. Pfizer disclosed information about those studies in increased warning letters approved by the FDA and sent to doctors on Oct. 15.

According to Forbes, "FitzGerald and two colleagues used statistical methods to try to make sure that he wasn't mixing apples and oranges by adding data about patients with arthritis, but he says the risk was certainly driven by the open heart surgery patients. In the first open heart surgery paper, patients were 3.5 times more likely to have heart attacks than those on a sugar pill. In the second, the risk was

2.88 times higher. In the third study, of arthritis patients, the risk was 1.77 times higher, according to slides presented by FitzGerald."

What is needed now is further study. Meanwhile, those injured by this drug will wonder why further study was not done sooner. Pfizer is trying to defend itself, claiming that meta-analysis shows the drug is safe.

FitzGerald calls for better warnings, rather than a withdrawal of the drug. In this way, a doctor can exercise his sound judgment in determining if the risks are worth the medical effectiveness of the drug. Pfizer may need to act fast in putting this warning out, so that patients are given the risks and choices of alternatives.

Michael Monheit, Esquire is the managing attorney for Monheit Law, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Monheit Law, P.C. concentrates its practice in the field of plaintiff personal injury cases on a contingency fee basis. They can be found at <http://www.monheit.com/Bextra>

Bextra, Stevens – Johnson Syndrome, and Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis—Is Their A Connection?

By Scott Montgomery

Stevens – Johnson syndrome is a life-threatening disease that affects the skin, which causes skin peeling rashes, and blistering of the mucous membranes. The blistering is usually in areas such as the mouth, eyes, and vagina, and the rash can be patchy and in various areas. The other variation of SJS, which is TEN (Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis), has some of the same effects as SJS, but with this variation the skin can start to peel off on a large scale. Both of these skin diseases cause massive misery, pain, anxiety, and can prove fatal.

SJS and TEN are almost always caused by a drug reaction, and Bextra is known to be a risk factor. Although the FDA and Pfizer directors were thought to be aware of the link between Bextra use and SJS/TEN it was approved and prescribed to millions. Moreover, it is only very recently that Pfizer have been ordered to add a black box warning - the strongest warning possible - to Bextra packaging providing information about the risks carried by the drug in relation to these skin diseases.

The warning comes far too late for some people, who obviously took the drug and suffered the effects. Bextra is now under fire once again for a possible link with heart attacks, although this is still being investigated. The side effects caused by Bextra have already resulted in a number of lawsuits against Pfizer, and it is likely that these lawsuits will continue to increase for the foreseeable future.

Those that have taken or are still taking Bextra are urged to educate themselves on the symptoms and effects of SJS/TEN and other Bextra side effects. If you notice anything amiss you should seek medical assistance immediately. You may also be entitled to compensation if you have suffered the side effects of Bextra, and there are now many lawyers and law firms that specialize in drug litigation and Bextra lawsuits. If you feel that you may have grounds for compensation - or even if you are unsure as to whether you have a case - it is advisable to contact an experienced Bextra lawyer. You will then be

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informed whether you have a valid case, and your lawyer can look at putting together a solid case in order to claim compensation for your medical expenses, pain, and suffering.

Scott Montgomery, who represents the Montgomery Law Firm, LLC specializes in handling cases that deal primarily with Bextra and its harmful side effects to consumers.

If you or a loved one has been injured by Bextra you may have valuable legal rights. We will evaluate your case for free.



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