Child Injury Laws *Blog*

Multiple Lawsuits Claim Abbott's Humira Caused Permanent Nerve Damage

*By **Jonathan Rosenfeld** on July 20, 2011*

Two separate lawsuits are alleging that Abbott Laboratories' best-selling Humira drug, used to treat a variety of medical conditions including arthritis and Crohn's disease, caused lasting nerve damage in patients' feet, eyes--- and complete neurological system.

The first lawsuit, filed in April by Kara Mae Pletan of Montana, claims that Humira was responsible for "stabbing pains and hypersensitivity" in her feet.

"The progression of the nerve damage seems to have stopped [after ceasing Humira injections]," Pletan said in court documents. "But the nerve damage appears to be permanent."

According to lawsuit papers, Pletan began developing severe nerve problems during her third month of Humira treatment in 2008. Along with suing Abbott for peripheral neuropathy (painful numbness in feet), Pletan claims that the pharmaceutical giant, Abbott, knowingly withheld information about the side effects of Humira.

"Abbott has downplayed the risk of side effects, including the very real risk of permanent neuropathy," said Pletan's lawyer, Andy Vickery.

The second lawsuit, filed in Illinois by New York resident Jamie Bixby, claims that Bixby suffered permanent damage to her optic nerve as a result of taking Humira in 2008.

“[If I had known] that Humira could be the source of my eye pain, I would have immediately discontinued taking the drug and would have immediately obtained proper emergency medical treatment,” Bixby said in her complaint.

Like Pletan, Bixby claims that Abbott did not give proper warning about the possibility of permanent nerve damage associated with Humira usage.

“Other competitor drugs in the same class have a specific warning about the risks of optic nerve damage,” Bixby said in her complaint. “Humira does not.”

In an e-mail statement, Abbott spokeswoman Adelle Infante claimed that “the therapeutic risks associated with Humira, including disorders of the nervous systems, are well-known and documented in the prescribing label.”

Humira was initially developed as a treatment for rheumatoid arthritis in 2003. In 2007, Abbott began marketing Humira as a treatment for Crohn’s Disease. In the past four years, Humira has become Abbott’s best-selling drug, with worldwide profits of $6.5 billion in 2010.

Beginning in 2008, the FDA required Humira to include a “black box” warning about possible side effects. A black box warning is the most serious warning the FDA can issue for a prescription drug.

Recent research studies have also shown that patients may be developing resistance to Humira.

As this lawsuit moves though the discovery phases, we may learn how much information Chicago-based, Abbott Laboratories, had with respect to the potentially devastating nerve damage inflicted by Humira. If indeed Abbott knew of the dangerous side-effects such as: vision loss, brain damage and peripheral neuropathy, they should be held accountable for these horrific injuries inflicted on a predominately young group of users.