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Wrongful Death/Mass Action Suits Filed Against Birth Control Patch

San Francisco, CA – (December, 12 2006) A wrongful death lawsuit involving a 26-year-old woman who died while using a popular birth control patch and a mass action suit on behalf of 55 women nationwide suffering from blood clots and other serious illnesses were filed today in California State Court in San Francisco. The women allege their injuries were caused by Ortho Evra, the fastest growing birth control contraceptive in the United States.

The two suits were filed against OrthoEvra's developer and manufacturer, Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical Company, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson (NYSE: JNJ) and the drug's distributor, McKesson Corporation (NYSE: MCK).

The wrongful death suit was filed by the mother of a 26-year-old Hollow Rock, Tennessee woman who died from a pulmonary embolism and blood clots in June 2003. The young woman started taking Ortho Evra in April 2003.

"Washington lawmakers such as former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist go out of their way to give legal immunity to pharmaceutical companies while one of Senator Frist's constituents pays the ultimate price for taking defective medications that should not be on the market," says Shawn Khorrami of the Law Offices of Shawn Khorrami, who with Kabateck Brown Kellner, LLP filed both suits.

Khorrami and Brian Kabateck, among the country's legal experts on Ortho Evra, carry the largest caseload in the country against Ortho Evra, representing more than 450 plaintiffs.

The wrongful death and the mass action lawsuits charge that Ortho-McNeil, the world's leading contraceptive manufacturer, knowingly deceived the public about the drug's severe risk of side effects, which include strokes, blood clots, deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolisms. These and other injuries dramatically altered the lives of the mass action plaintiffs who reside throughout the country, according to the mass action lawsuit.

The suits further contend that the defendants failed to properly investigate Ortho Evra's safety and actively knew of the contraceptive's harmful effects while continuing to market and distribute the drug without accurate warning.

Ortho Evra, FDA- approved in November 2001, is the first and only once-a-week birth control patch worn on the skin and the only contraceptive that continuously releases estrogen and progestin directly into the bloodstream. After logging more than 9,117 adverse reactions to the patch --far higher than those of oral contraceptives-- the FDA, on November 10, 2005, required Ortho Evra to carry a new bolded warning that the drug exposed women to 60 percent higher levels of estrogen than oral contraceptives. The women in both lawsuits took Ortho Evra before the warning requirement went into effect.

"We believe that Ortho-McNeil knew of the dangers of the Ortho patch sold in the U.S. and choose to ignore them," explained Kabateck. "Patches sold in other countries, including Canada, actually contain a smaller, less dangerous dosage. Now, young women across the country are suffering serious illness and even death."

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