

FOR

IMMEDIATE

RELEASE

Class Action Civil Rights Suit Filed in Federal Court Against California Prisons for Failure to Properly Treat Inmates with Hepatitis C

Shawn Khorrami
Law Offices of Khorrami, Pollard & Abir
444 S. Flower St., 33rd Floor, Los Angeles, CA
310-308-9423
SKhorrami@kpalawyers.com

Press contact:

D. Infusino
310-497-2476

Los Angeles, Calif. (July 8, 2008)

With Hepatitis C now an epidemic in California prisons, a class action lawsuit was filed today in Federal Court which would require the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to provide thousands of inmates suffering from Hepatitis C with the proper diagnostic testing and treatment that they are currently being denied. Filed by the downtown Los Angeles firm of Khorrami, Pollard & Abir, the suit contends that the CDCR is wrongly excluding thousands of inmates from liver biopsies and anti-viral treatment and allowing their disease to progress to more advanced stages of liver damage. The lack of proper diagnostic testing and treatment further spreads the disease among the inmate population.

Hepatitis C currently infects about 40% of the approximately 190,000 inmates in California prisons. The standard of care as set by the Center for Disease Control, the National Institute of Health and most medical practitioners requires that patients with Stage II Hepatitis be offered treatment. However, the CDCR requires inmates to develop a more advanced stage of

Hepatitis C (compared to the general civilian population) before offering them antiviral treatment. At more advanced stages, treatment is less likely to succeed. Moreover, many California inmates do not receive even the liver biopsies necessary to determine the stage of their disease.

Without treatment, a significant percentage of Hepatitis C patients will develop cirrhosis, liver failure, and cancer of the liver. Hepatitis C is the principal cause of liver failure and the main reason for liver transplantation in the United States.

“A court already decided the appropriate punishment for these people. The Department of Corrections is playing judge, jury, and executioner and doling out a punishment that no court would allow. This is unacceptable, inhumane and constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, which is prohibited by the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution,” says Khorrami.

Case Number:

The case has been filed on behalf of lead plaintiff, Kevin Jackson, currently an inmate at the California State Prison at Solano and names as a defendant Robin Dezember, the Director of the Division of Correctional Health Care Services who is responsible for establishing health care policies for the prison system in California.

Jackson was diagnosed with Stage II Hepatitis on August 27, 2007, and although he has repeatedly requested treatment, the CDCR has refused.

Hepatitis C is a serious viral infection of the liver, spread by contamination with blood from infected persons such as occurs through illicit intravenous drug use, tattoos, or contaminated therapeutic blood products. There are about six genetic strains of Hepatitis C.

Fortunately, good and effective treatment is available with a combination of two drugs, ribavirin and interferon.

“Despite an established standard of care, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has adopted protocols designed to exclude patients from diagnostic biopsies and treatment. This is in contrast to the care and treatment provided to the general population,” says Khorrami. “This practice not only denies inmates proper care and allows their health to deteriorate, but also presents a health danger of further spreading the disease not only within the prison population but also in the general population once the infected inmates are released from prison.”

For press information, contact:

D. Infusino
310-497-2476

Shawn Khorrami
Law Offices of Khorrami, Pollard & Abir
310-308-9423
SKhorrami@kpalawyers.com