

Stryker faces mounting lawsuits over recalled hip implants

Patients in the US who were implanted with Stryker's Rejuvenate and ABG II hip systems and have had to undergo revision surgeries are now suing the Kalamazoo, Michigan firm for selling defective devices.

The hip implants were subjects of a US recall by Stryker in July, after it emerged that there was a risk of fretting and corrosion with the devices. These issues in turn can cause adverse local tissue reactions, resulting in pain and/or inflammation at the local joint site (www.clinica.co.uk, 11 July 2012). The company stopped global distribution of the devices as part of the recall.

South Florida legal firm Searcy Denney Scarola Barnhart & Shipley is now representing eight patients who received these implants between June 2009 and September 2011 and then underwent revision surgery "in as little as eight months". The firm had filed one complaint first in August, but have just filed a further seven lawsuits against Stryker Orthopaedics; all the

suits were filed in a Bergen County Superior Court in New Jersey.

"Stryker marketed its devices as an improvement over and alternative to other metal-on-metal hip implants when in fact these systems have caused significantly more severe injuries than comparable systems on the market," lawyers say

According to the complaint, the revision surgery revealed in each instance heavy metal toxicity, including "the presence of milky, turbid fluid; large pseudotumor formation; soft tissue necrosis; and muscle loss and/or bony necrosis at the proximal femur".

Problems with metal-on-metal

(MoM) hip implants have been under the spotlight for some time, particularly the issue of the debris from metal components wearing down and circulating in the blood stream. At the time of its recall in July, Stryker had insisted that the issues with Rejuvenate and ABG II were not the same as those seen with MoM hips. "This issue is related to fretting and/or corrosion at or about the modular neck junction, not metal wear associated with articulating surfaces," the Stryker spokesperson had told *Clinica*.

However, lawyers at Searcy Denney claim in their press release that "Stryker marketed its devices as an improvement over and alternative to other metal-on-metal hip implants when in fact these systems have caused significantly more severe injuries than comparable systems on the market".

The plaintiffs are seeking compensatory, consortium, actual and punitive damages.

Stryker has declined to comment.

Covidien adds to medtech layoff toll with 600 job cuts

Covidien is the latest medtech company to join the workforce cull as it plans to cut 595 full-time jobs with the closure of a facility in South Carolina. The closure is part of the company's plan to cut costs amid challenges brought on by pricing pressures and reimbursement issues.

The Seneca-based facility manufactures vascular products; RBC Capital Markets analyst Glenn Navarro said in a *Reuters* article that the plant had not been a growth driver for Covidien for some years, as it belonged to the company's legacy business. Covidien inherited a considerable healthcare products portfolio when it was renamed and spun out of the conglomerate Tyco International; since then it has pursued a strategy of divesting slow-growth product lines and investing in faster-growth businesses, such as its acquisition of endovascular

treatment specialist ev3 (www.clinica.co.uk, 2 June 2010) which has been boosting the firm's vascular sales.

The closure of the Seneca facility is expected to be completed in three years and its operations will be transferred to another plant in Alajuela, Costa Rica.

The closure of the Seneca facility is expected to be completed in three years

At the time of *Clinica* going to press, a Covidien spokesperson was not available to comment on how much cost savings the move is expected to bring to the company.

Covidien joins an ever growing list of medtech companies that are laying off staff and reorganising their operations

as they tighten their belts to offset the impact of the US medical device tax, which kicks in next year and is expected to take a considerable chunk off their bottom line. Recently, Welch Allyn said it would be cutting 275 jobs (see page 29) while around 300 staff will be laid off at St Jude Medical (see page 5). Other companies that have been swinging their axes include: Medtronic, which is halfway through a 1,000-job cull, in a bid to save \$100-125m a year, according to a recent SEC filing; Hologic, which is reportedly planning to close a Wisconsin manufacturing plant and shed 130 jobs, after its acquisition of molecular diagnostics firm Gen-Probe; and Boston Scientific, which laid off 50 workers from its operations in Ireland, and is rumoured to be cutting some more jobs with the possible split of its cardiac division (www.clinica.co.uk, 30 August 2012).

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