

Lawsuit alleges Eli Lilly Parkinson's drug linked to gambling

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A second lawsuit has been filed in Ontario that alleges a connection between gambling and a popular drug to treat Parkinson's disease.

Eli Lilly Canada Inc. of Toronto said it received a statement of claim that alleges its Permax drug causes "compulsive, obsessive behaviour, including pathological gambling."

Lilly, which manufactures the drug, said it hasn't previously been a party in any such lawsuit. Other defendants named in the statement of claim, which contains allegations not proven in court, include Lilly Canada's U.S. parent company; **Draxis Health Inc.**; and **Shire BioChem Inc.**

Lilly and Mississauga-based Draxis did not identify the plaintiff, who is seeking to have the lawsuit certified as a class action in the Superior Court of Justice of Ontario.

Both companies said the claim is without merit and they plan to vigorously defend the action and any motion for class-action status.

Prior to July, 2003, Permax was distributed in Canada by Draxis Pharmaceutica, when it was acquired by Shire.

Two years ago, researchers at the Muhammad Ali Parkinson's Research Center in Phoenix examined data of nearly 1,281 patients who had been taking three commonly used drugs to treat the degenerative brain disorder: Permax, Mirapex and Requip.

Nine of those patients were diagnosed as pathological gamblers, with gambling addictions that led to severe financial hardship. None of them had a gambling problem before taking the drugs. When their medications were switched or their doses lowered, most were able to control their behaviour.

In May, an Ontario man suffering from Parkinson's disease sued **Boehringer Ingelhelm (Canada) Ltd.**, which manufactures Mirapex in Canada, and **Pfizer Inc.**, which makes the drug in the United States. He claims to have developed a gambling addiction in 1999 soon after he began taking the drug.

Boehringer has asked Health Canada to update Mirapex's monograph to include compulsive gambling as a side effect. LLY (NYSE) fell \$1.25 (U.S.) to \$55. DAX (TSX) fell 4 cents (Canadian) to \$5.85. Leonard Zehr