

## **Mirapex Victim Awarded \$8.2 Million in First Gambling Addiction Lawsuit**

The first Mirapex lawsuit to go to trial has resulted in an \$8.2 million award to the plaintiff, Mealey's Emerging Drugs & Devices is reporting. The lawsuit was the first of more than 300 to go to trial in the Mirapex multidistrict litigation in the US District Court in Minneapolis that blame the Parkinson's Disease drug for causing compulsive gambling. It was considered a bellweather case, and was being watched by many to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the other Mirapex lawsuits.

Gary Charbonneau, who began taking Mirapex in December 1997, said he suffered from a gambling addiction from March 2002 to February 2006. In that period of time, he gambled away \$260,000. Charbonneau's lawsuit not only claimed that Mirapex caused his gambling problem, but that the drug's makers, Pfizer and Boehringer Ingelheim, knew about its potential to cause compulsive behavior, but did not issue any warnings, or take steps to investigate the true scope of the problem.

Other Mirapex lawsuits claim that Boehringer Ingelheim received reports linking the drug to compulsive behavior during clinical trials conducted in the 1990s, and received additional reports of patients developing gambling addictions after it came on the market. It wasn't until 2005 - eight years after its introduction - that information about compulsive behavior was finally added to the Mirapex label.

The defendants argued that they were not liable for Charbonneau's addiction because the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) had not asked for any label changes, despite reports that Mirapex was causing compulsive behavior. They also argued that Charbonneau's gambling problem started years after he began treatment with Mirapex, and continued long after he stopped taking the drug.

The federal jury, however, agreed with Charbonneau and awarded him all of his gambling losses, along with \$7.8 million in punitive damages. Neither Pfizer nor Boehringer Ingelheim have commented on Thursday's verdict, but an appeal is likely.

Mirapex, one of a class of drugs known as dopamine agonists, has long been suspected of causing compulsive behavior. The suspicion was bolstered in June, when researchers investigating the link between dopamine agonists and compulsive behavior presented their findings at International Congress of Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders conference in Chicago. The study, which looked at more than 3,000 patients from 46 medical centers in the United States and Canada, found that Parkinson's patients on dopamine agonists are nearly three times more likely to have at least one impulse-control disorder - including gambling addiction - compared with patients receiving other treatments.