

# Merck's Vioxx cases drag on

August 21 2007

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Lawsuits related to the painkiller Vioxx have little prospect of resolution for the thousands who have sued the drug company Merck, it was reported.

An estimated 45,000 people have sued Merck, contending the drug caused heart attacks and strokes. Merck has spent more than \$1 billion on legal fees during the last three years on Vioxx cases and has vowed to contest each lawsuit, The New York Times reported Tuesday.

Merck, the third-largest U.S. drug maker, is betting its aggressive resistance will reduce the number of cases and, ultimately, its liability, the Times reported. The result is a legal limbo in which even those who have won a case against Merck have yet to see any money because Merck immediately appeals, the newspaper said.

Estimates of Merck's liability, once as high as \$25 billion, now is closer to \$5 billion, corporate risk analysts told the Times.

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Citation: Merck's Vioxx cases drag on (2007, August 21) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-08-merck-vioxx-cases.html>

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