Medical Xpress

Johnson & Johnson found 'negligent' in Australian lawsuit

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An Australian court found Thursday that Johnson & Johnson was "negligent" in supplying thousands of women pelvic meshes without adequate testing or health warnings, a ruling that exposes the firm to millions of dollars in damages.

Federal Court Justice Anna Katzmann upheld a class action from more than 1,000 Australian women who say the mesh—designed to support weakened muscles holding up the pelvic organs—had disastrous side-effects.

The amount of damages will be set in next year, but the ruling said three companies in the Johnson & Johnson group rushed to get the sub-standard products to market without adequate testing, while vastly underplaying potential dangers.

"The risks were known, not insignificant, and on the respondents' own admission, could cause significant and serious harm" the judge said. "A far more cautious approach was warranted."

Lawyers for the women said the devices caused "incontinence, infection and chronic pain" among a litany of problems.

"It has been a long journey towards justice for the many women whose lives were destroyed by the defective pelvic mesh and incontinence tape implants." said Rebecca Jancauskas, special counsel for Shine Lawyers—which helped bring the class action.

The ruling is just one in a series to hit mesh manufacturers worldwide. Tens of thousands of lawsuits have been lodged in the United States alone.

Earlier this year Johnson & Johnson agreed to pay US$117 million to settle some US claims over their vaginal mesh products.

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