

Denise Dunn

From: Susan Bonnell
Sent: Wednesday, May 16, 2007 8:54 AM
To: Oscar Howell; George Tilley; Heather Predham; Stephen Dodge
Subject: CTV National News Last Night

Affidavit: cancer patients given wrong treatment

Updated Tue. May. 15 2007 7:58 PM ET

CTV.ca News Staff

More than 300 breast cancer patients in Newfoundland and Labrador did not receive proper treatment because of incorrect test results, according to an affidavit filed in the province's Supreme Court.

In 2005, the Eastern Health Authority asked Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital to review 2,000 hormone receptor tests dating back to May 1997, after oncologists found conflicting results in breast tumour samples.

According to the affidavit, signed by the authority's risk management consultant Heather Predham, 763 women were given the tests. Of that number, 317 received the wrong result.

Gerry Rogers was diagnosed with cancer in 1999 and lost both of her breasts. She is now one of 47 women suing pursuing a class-action lawsuit against the health authority because of the tests.

"There are some women I know who are quite devastated," Rogers told NTV News on Tuesday. "What it has done is basically shaken their faith and trust in the medical system."

Hormone receptor tests determine if a patient is estrogen- and/or progesterone-positive, in which case they may benefit from hormone therapy like Tamoxifen.

"There was a group of people out there whose treatment was going to change and they really needed to ensure that happened, and that needed to be communicated and well understood," said Health Minister Ross Wiseman.

"I appreciate, as well, where they're coming from with respect to the litigation."

The 47 women launched their lawsuit last year.

Opposition health critic Dwight Ball accused the government of not doing enough to fix problems with the tests or informing the public.

"We think that the public had a right to know," he said. "And we see this government right now with Eastern Health putting the litigation process above the treatments that were necessary."

Peter Dawe, head of the province's Cancer Society, said hormone receptor tests are notoriously complicated. But he still found the number of incorrect results by

the authority extremely worrying.

"A 42 per cent error rate is almost like flipping a coin," he said.

The authority has refused to discuss the test results while the case is before the courts, but Dawe said the public should be educated about the findings.

"Two years ago, we had people contacting us just hysterical -- I mean, literally panicking -- and we went through that process with dozens of people," he said.

With a report from NTV News and files from The Canadian Press



Eastern
Health

Susan Bonnell

Director, Strategic Communications
709-777-1426 (1338)