

17 June 2007

I'M TRAPPED

EXCLUSIVE Mum sues over drug which left her too scared to go out

By Jim Lawson

A SCOTS mum is to sue drugs giant GlaxoSmithKline after claiming their antidepressant Seroxat made her scared to leave her home.

Diane Smith claims she became agoraphobic when she tried to wean herself off the controversial drug.

She even missed her son's wedding and could not go to see her dying father as she has become a prisoner in her own home.

Diane, 43, of Thurso, Caithness, has issued a writ in the High Court in London claiming £50,000.

Seroxat has been linked to a string of suicides and users say they have suffered serious side effects, including depression.

Diane's case is the first to be lodged over the effects of coming off the drug.

Her action was launched this year to beat an English High Court 10-year timebar as she started taking the drug in 1997.

In January, an investigation for the BBC's Panorama claimed GlaxoSmithKline covered up vital evidence about Seroxat's safety.

Mum-of-four Diane was on the antidepressant for five years from August 1997 to June 2001.

She said: "I was walking on the beach with my handicapped son Lee, who is now 18, when I suddenly felt dizzy and the whole beach started to sway. It was the strangest sensation.

"I went to see the doctor who said I was suffering from stress and prescribed Seroxat.

"I was on it for five years until 2001 when suddenly the psychiatrist took me off it. Then the trouble started.

"I felt suicidal. I get panic attacks and I cannot go out. I can't even go to the supermarket just down the road. I'm a prisoner in my own home. When my son James got married I couldn't go. When my daughter Denise graduated I couldn't go and when my dad died I could not be at his bedside - all because of this drug.

"I'm not really interested in the money. I'm more interested in getting the truth known because this drug is a danger."

Her husband James, 50, said: "It's been a terrible time for Diane and it has not been easy for the rest of us. It's broken our hearts."

Since it was first prescribed in 1990, Seroxat has been linked to at least 50 suicides of adults and children.

It was banned for under-18s in 2003 after a government watchdog found it trebled the risk of suicidal thoughts in depressed children.

A spokesman for GlaxoSmithKline said: "Seroxat has helped millions of people lead fuller lives and has helped revolutionise the treatment of depression and other psychiatric conditions. The majority of patients do not suffer symptoms on stopping Seroxat.

"If they do occur most patients find they are mild and go away on their own, although in some patients they may be more severe and/or prolonged.

"The most common symptoms include dizziness, sensory disturbances, sleep disturbance, anxiety and headache."

The drug company have been bombarded by lawsuits in the US.

Donald Schell, 60, from Wyoming, killed his wife, daughter and granddaughter, then shot himself after taking the drug for just two days.

His son-in-law Tim Tobin sued and GSK were ordered to pay £4.5million.