

POSTED ON 23/03/06

## Tissue recipients launch lawsuit

OLIVER MOORE

A Canadian retiree is "scared as hell" and is suing for damages after learning he may have received human tissue from alleged body-snatchers in the United States.

Clarence Renaud was told in January by a doctor that he could have been exposed to hazardous human tissue during surgery. The warning came nearly three years after a back operation and has him worried about a long list of potentially deadly diseases.

"The tissues they used were tainted, that's all I know," the 68-year-old man said from his home in Windsor, Ont. "I didn't feel too good about it. You worry. I went to three different blood tests to see if I had syphilis and what not."

Mr. Renaud is one of 23 Windsor-area people to receive such warnings. Nearly half of them have subsequently signed on to a \$210-million class-action lawsuit that names Mr. Renaud as the representative plaintiff. The suit has not been certified.

At the core of the suit is the now-defunct Biomedical Tissue Services Ltd. It was the company of Michael Mastromarino, who has been charged in the state of New York along with three others with stripping parts from corpses and selling them for transplant and research, allegedly after first changing data about the age and medical state of the unwitting donors.

Nearly 300 of these human-tissue products were imported into Canada and close to half of them have already been implanted in patients. Canadian health officials are concerned about patients who may have received tissue from BTS, leading to the warnings to Mr. Renaud and others.

News of the risky situation came as a bolt out of the blue for Mr. Renaud and has put him on a treadmill of blood tests. All the tests have come up negative so far, but diseases such as HIV have long latency periods leaving Mr. Renaud uncertain of the danger. He can expect several more years of testing.

**Mr. Renaud and the other nine Windsor-area patients are being represented by Greg Monforton.**

Their suit, which was filed yesterday in Windsor, names Biomedical Tissue Services Ltd., two of its founders and four distributors of human-tissue grafts. The \$210-million being sought is a combination of both compensatory and punitive damages.

**"This would clearly seem to be a case where punitive damages were warranted," Mr. Monforton said.**

Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor, where Mr. Renaud was treated, is not named because there is no evidence of wrongdoing on its part, the lawyer explained.

© Copyright 2006 Bell Globemedia Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved.

 Bell Globemedia