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## St. Clair County

### Pfizer sued by parents claiming Zoloft use caused birth defects

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Cueto

The ingestion of Zoloft during pregnancy led eight different couples to parent children born with various birth defects, according to a recently filed lawsuit that name the drug's manufacturer as a defendant.

Hope Lower, Cindy and Gene Bendickson, Marianne Buneta and Jason Gultch, Monica and Roosevelt Jones, Carlisa and John Black, Mary Schulze, Norneesa Knowles and Sharon Jones and Antoine Bossier filed a lawsuit Nov. 4 in St. Clair County Circuit Court against Pfizer.

Two of the plaintiffs are Illinois residents. Others are from Indiana, Minnesota, Florida, Wisconsin, Texas and New York.

In their complaint, the plaintiffs allege their children were born with varying birth defects after the mothers ingested Zoloft throughout their pregnancies. The mothers took the anti-depressant only because they believed it to be a safe medication to ingest during the gestation period, according to the complaint.

However, their babies were born with varying birth defects, including heart defects, neural tube defects, gastroschisis, omphalocele, craniosynostosis, cleft lip, club foot, anal atresia and limb reduction defects, the suit states. The plaintiffs attribute the defects to the Zoloft they took while pregnant.

"Pfizer knew or should have known that Zoloft crosses the placenta, which could have important implications for the developing fetus," the suit states.

Pfizer knew of the dangers to pregnant women, but failed to reveal them to the public, the complaint says. In fact, the plaintiffs allege Pfizer continued to market the drug as the safest antidepressant on the market for expectant mothers, despite its knowledge of the risks.

"Pfizer's sales force blitzed doctor's offices with literature and verbal presentations designed to convince doctors and consumers that Zoloft was a superior drug for treatment of, among other things, depression during pregnancy," the suit states. "Pfizer aggressively promoted Zoloft as an improvement over other antidepressant drugs on the ground that Zoloft was less likely to cause side effects if taken during pregnancy."

In their complaint, the plaintiffs allege strict products liability, breach of express warranty, negligence, misrepresentation by omission, negligent misrepresentation, fraud and misrepresentation, fraud by concealment, violation of consumer protection laws and breach of implied warranties against Pfizer.

They seek unspecified compensatory damages, plus statutory remedies, a disgorgement of profits, pre-judgment interest, costs and other relief the court deems just.

Christopher Cueto and Michael Gras of the Law Office of Christopher Cueto in Belleville will be representing them.

*St. Clair County Circuit Court case number: 11-L-625.*