

Litigation Alleging Syngenta's Paraquat Weed Killer Causes Parkinson's Disease Moving Toward Trial

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Lawyers involved in U.S. litigation accusing Syngenta AG of spending decades selling an herbicide that causes Parkinson's disease are moving toward selection of a bellwether trial to be held roughly a year from now, according to the federal judge overseeing the litigation.

In a hearing on Friday, U.S. District Judge Nancy Rosenstengel of the Southern District of Illinois told lawyers for the hundreds of plaintiffs so far involved in the cases against Syngenta that they should work quickly to have the plaintiffs complete assessment questionnaires and provide their medical records and other relevant documents.

She said lawyers should be planning for a trial this time next year, though it is not clear yet who the first plaintiff or group of plaintiffs will be.

Rosenstengel is overseeing what is known as "multidistrict litigation (MDL) as a means of consolidating the pretrial proceedings, such as discovery of evidence and depositions of witnesses. There are currently more than 380 cases within the MDL.

The judge also advised lawyers for plaintiffs and the defendants to work [to coordinate](#) with lawsuits in state courts that are making the same allegations – that exposure to paraquat weed killer caused the plaintiffs to develop Parkinson's disease, a devastating neurological disease. Cases are pending in California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

Along with Syngenta, the defendants include Chevron Phillips Chemical Company LP, and Chevron USA, Inc. All have denied any liability.

On Friday, lawyers for Chevron USA Inc. [filed a stipulation](#) with the court stating that they had reached an agreement with plaintiffs' co-lead counsel allowing for the dismissal of Chevron USA and other entities from the litigation.

The stipulation states that Chevron Chemical Company (whose liabilities Chevron U.S.A. Inc. assumed) stopped distributing paraquat in 1986 and transferred all paraquat registrations held by Chevron to a non-Chevron entity at that time.

Lawyers around the United States are advertising for plaintiffs, seeking to draw in thousands of people who've been exposed to paraquat and now suffer from Parkinson's.

The lawsuits [include allegations](#) "that manufacturers and sellers of paraquat deliberately concealed the dangers of paraquat for at least four decades, hid evidence of its dangers from government safety agencies, and knowingly released a product they knew caused Parkinson's Disease on the public."

On Oct. 27, Judge Rosenstengel [issued an order](#) regarding the "preservation and production" of documents and other information. The defendants had already turned over a large amount of internal documents and other materials in a lawsuit that they settled earlier this year. Those materials are to be provided to the plaintiffs' attorneys in the MDL action.

Several scientific studies have linked [paraquat to Parkinson's](#), including a [large study of U.S. farmers](#) jointly overseen by multiple U.S. government agencies. Farmers use paraquat in the production of many crops, including corn, soy and cotton. The Agricultural Health Study (AHS) said it found that "exposure to agricultural pesticides may increase a person's risk of developing Parkinson's disease." In 2011, AHS researchers reported that "participants who used paraquat or rotenone were twice as likely to develop Parkinson's disease as people who didn't use these chemicals."

Lawyers for plaintiff [George Isaak](#) sought the judge's permission to grant Isaak an expedited trial early in 2022 but were rejected.

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