

With “Mountainous” Evidence on Plaintiffs’ Side, Hundreds of Cancer Cases Against Monsanto Get Green Light

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After opening arguments kicked off in California state court on Monday for a Bay Area man's [landmark lawsuit](#) alleging that Monsanto's popular weedkiller Roundup caused him to develop cancer, a federal judge on Tuesday ruled that hundreds of unrelated but similar cases against the agrochemical company can also proceed to trial.

U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria in San Francisco [concluded](#) that although he believes the evidence presented by attorneys representing the cancer patients and their families, “seems too equivocal to support any firm conclusion that glyphosate,” the active ingredient Roundup, causes in cancer, the matter should be taken up by a jury. As *Reuters* [noted](#), his decision “followed years of litigation and weeks of hearings.”

It also follows the first day of trial for DeWayne “Lee” Johnson’s suit in California’s San Francisco Superior Court. Johnson is a 46-year-old father of three who was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma after years of working as a groundskeeper for school district, a position which regularly exposed him to a pair of Monsanto products containing glyphosate.

Although the state of [California](#) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)—a branch of the World Health Organization (WHO)—have classified glyphosate as a [probable human carcinogen](#), [U.S.](#) and [European](#) regulators continue to defy scientists and anti-pesticide activists’ warnings by allowing farmers to keep spraying the world’s most common herbicide.

While Monsanto maintains that its products are safe—with a company attorney claiming in court on Monday that “scientific evidence is overwhelming that glyphosate-based products do not cause cancer”—some [4,000 plaintiffs](#) have alleged that Monsanto’s glyphosate products such as Roundup have made them sick. However, Johnson’s case is the first to go trial.

During opening statements on Monday, the *Guardian* [reports](#), Johnson’s attorney Brent Wisner showed jurors photographs of lesions on his client’s body that were a result of his cancer and declared:

“The simple fact is he’s going to die. It’s just a matter of time.”

As Johnson reportedly lowered his head and his wife cried beside him, Wisner added,

“Between now and then, it’s just nothing but pain.”

The attorney argued that Monsanto—which recently [merged](#) with German pharmaceutical giant Bayer—“has specifically gone out of its way to bully...and to fight independent researchers.

“Wisner,” the newspaper noted, “presented internal Monsanto emails that he said showed how the agrochemical company rejected critical research and expert warnings over the years while pursuing and helping to write favorable analyses of their products.”

In addition to internal documents, Wisner also said the trial will feature depositions from 10 former or current Monsanto employees, and that there is “a mountain of data,” going back to 2000, which shows that exposure to glyphosate can cause genetic damage that could lead to the type of cancer Johnson has.

“We’re going to see for the first time evidence that nobody has seen before, evidence that has been in Monsanto’s files that we’ve obtained from lawyers and the people in Monsanto,” co-counsel Robert F. Kennedy Jr. [told](#) the San Francisco Chronicle. “I don’t think it’s a surprise after 20 years Monsanto has known about the cancer-causing properties of this chemical and has tried to stop the public from knowing it, and tried to manipulate the regulatory process.”

Kennedy added that he believes this case will help the [hundreds of other clients](#) he is representing in cases filed against the company.

“So many people have been exposed to this chemical, this group of chemicals, and many of them have been injured,” he said. “The science is on our side. It is mountainous.”

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