

Hundreds of Deceased Women Worldwide Due to Contraceptives

Schweizer Fernsehen

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Up to the present, only isolated cases were known. Now, research by Swiss television program “10vor10” indicates that hundreds of women have died worldwide in the last 10 years as a result of having used hormonal contraceptives. For the first time, “10vor10” was successful in obtaining a rare glance into the databank of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Swissmedic (Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products) has verified the magnitude of the fatalities.

“10vor10” combed through the data on the products of world market leaders. These included the contraceptives made by Bayer, “Yasmin” and “Yaz”, as well as the hormonal patch “Evra” made by Janssen Cilag, and “Nuvaring” by Essex Chemie.

The most widely-sold products also appear in the database to be most commonly associated with negative health consequences – and most commonly with fatalities. The fatalities – in established numbers: “Yasmin” – 140 fatalities, “Yaz” – 50 fatalities, “Nuvaring” – 40 fatalities, and “Evra” – 130 fatalities. The Director of Market Oversight at Swissmedic, Karoline Mathys, confirmed the number of worldwide fatalities to “10vor10”: “If one studies the international health data, these numbers would then represent the scale.”

FDA Lists More Than 10,000 Entries

The CD from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration lists reports from physicians, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies and private entities. Contained within the more than 10,000 reports submitted within the last ten years relating to the leading products, harmless side effects such as headaches and sleeplessness are documented; there are, however, also pulmonary embolisms and fatalities.

The reports do not indicate if, and to what extent, the contraceptives contributed to individual fatalities. These are incidents of suspicion, not established physician reports.

Leading Inspector “Awestruck and Surprised”

Head Physician in Basel and President of the Swissmedic Co-Commission for the Accreditation of Medication, Stephan Krähenbühl, expressed surprise to “10vor10” on the high number of fatalities: “It is emotionally touching and very tragic to me”. At the same time, it has been known that hormonal contraceptives cause embolisms and thromboses, and in extreme cases may lead to death.

Bern gynecologist Daniel Brügger, who has been warning against the newer hormonal contraceptives for years, stated: “I am shocked. These fatality figures should have been better communicated.”

Why Has Swissmedic Not Mentioned Fatalities Until Now?

Karoline Mathys of Swissmedic told “10vor10”: “If any incident reports were evaluated and numbers were published for all medications (and there are many medications), uncertainty would result – from numbers which are not so reliable.” Mathys added that studies would be required to determine the incidence of a risk.

Pharmaceutical Companies: Incident Reports Without Informative Value

The pharmaceutical companies Bayer, Janssen Cilag and Essex Chemie would not issue an opinion concerning the concrete number of fatalities. They indicated, however, that the reports were incident-related, and as such, were not always complete; information concerning medications concurrently taken, as well as details on pre-existing medical conditions and predisposition, would often be missing.

FDA Study of the Fatalities

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration would not issue comment to “10vor10” concerning the figures, even though they themselves provided the data. The FDA only communicated that a study of the fatalities was currently underway.

In response, the President of the Swissmedic Co-Commission for the Accreditation of Medication, Stephan Krähenbühl, stated: “If I was the director of an agency which had documented so many incident reports which involved fatalities, I would also more closely examine this.”

Lawsuits in the USA and Canada

The results of the FDA study should also interest law firms in the USA. Because of side effects relating to its contraceptives “Yasmin” and “Yaz”, Bayer has been confronted with 1,750 lawsuits in the USA alone, and eight class action lawsuits in Canada (based on its own information). Janssen Cilag and Essex Chemie declined any further comment.