

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA**

IN RE: VIOXX	:	MDL NO. 1657
PRODUCTS LIABILITY LITIGATION	:	
	:	SECTION: L
	:	
	:	JUDGE FALLON
	:	MAG. JUDGE
.....	:	KNOWLES

THIS DOCUMENT RELATES TO ALL CASES

PRETRIAL ORDER NO. 18
(Plaintiff Profile Form and Authorizations and Merck Profile Form)

This Order governs the form and schedule for service of a Plaintiff Profile Form ("PPF") and executed Authorizations for the release of records to be completed by plaintiffs - and Merck Profile Form ("MPF") to be completed by Merck in all individual (that is, non-class action) cases in which plaintiffs claim to have sustained a myocardial infarction, an ischemic stroke, or a death ("cardiovascular event") that were: (1) transferred to this Court by the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation, pursuant to its Order of February 16, 2005; (2) subsequently transferred to this Court by the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation pursuant to Rule 7.4 of the Rules of Procedure of that Panel; and (3) originally filed in this Court or transferred or removed to this Court.

This Order neither applies to nor imposes any obligation on any Defendant in any individual action in MDL 1657 other than Merck.

Plaintiff Profile Forms:

1. Plaintiffs in all cardiovascular event cases shall each complete and serve upon Merck a PPF and Authorizations for Release of Records of all healthcare providers and other sources of information and records (*e.g.*, pharmacies, employers, etc.) in the form set forth in Attachment A. Those plaintiffs shall also produce with their PPF all documents responsive to the document requests contained therein.

2. Unless the parties agree otherwise or by order of the Court, complete and verified PPFs, signed and dated Authorizations, and all responsive documents shall be produced on the following schedule in all cardiovascular event cases that have been filed in or transferred to MDL 1657 as of the date of this Order: for plaintiffs whose last names begin with the letters A through C, within sixty (60) days after the date of this Order; for plaintiffs whose last names begin with the letters D through G, within seventy-five (75) days after the date of this Order; and for plaintiffs whose last names begin with the letters H through L, within ninety (90) days after the date of this Order; for plaintiffs whose last names begin with the letters M through R, within one hundred five (105) days after the date of this Order; and for plaintiffs whose names begin with the letters S through Z, within one hundred twenty (120) days after the date of this Order.

3. Plaintiffs in individual cardiovascular event cases that are filed in or transferred to this MDL proceeding after the date of this Order shall provide complete and verified PPFs, signed and dated Authorizations, and all responsive documents within seventy-five (75) days of their transfer order or the date on which they are filed in this

proceeding.

4. Plaintiffs who fail to provide complete and verified PPFs, signed and dated Authorizations, and all responsive documents requested in the PPF within the time periods set forth hereinabove shall be given notice by e-mail or fax from Defendants' Liaison Counsel and shall be given twenty (20) additional days to cure such deficiency. No other extensions will be granted.

5. Plaintiffs shall serve the DLC with the PPF responses, signed and dated Authorizations, and responsive documents by serving a hard copy on Defendants' Liaison Counsel, Phillip A. Wittmann at Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann L.L.C., 546 Carondelet Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130-3588, and by serving an electronic copy via LexisNexis File & Serve on Wilfred P. Coronato at Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP, Zara Dzhavakov at Dechert LLP, and Richard C. Stanley at Stanley, Flanagan & Reuter LLC and firms representing any other defendants in that case within the time periods set forth herein. To ensure that only the intended recipients have access to the aforementioned documents, plaintiffs' counsel must upload said documents by selecting "Sealed, Electronic" in the "Access" field of the "Documents" tab under the "Filing & Service" option.

6. Authorizations shall be dated and signed "in blank" (*i.e.*, without setting forth the identity of the custodian of the records or provider of care). Merck may use the authorizations for all healthcare providers and other sources of information and records (e.g., pharmacies, employers, etc.) identified in the PPF, without further notice to plaintiff's counsel. The Defendants Steering Committee ("DSC") shall post the records

received pursuant to the authorizations on a secure website maintained by the DSC's vendor and notify claimant's attorney and Plaintiffs' Liaison Counsel by e-mail of the posting. Plaintiff's counsel in a particular case and Plaintiffs' Liaison Counsel may access that website to obtain copies of their clients' medical records at their cost.

7. If Merck wishes to use an authorization to obtain records from a source that is not identified in the PPF, Merck shall provide the plaintiff's counsel for that particular case with seven (7) days written notice (by telecopy or email) of the intent to use an authorization to obtain records from that source. If plaintiff's counsel fails to object to the request within seven (7) days, Merck may use the authorization to request the records from the source identified in the notice. If plaintiff's counsel objects to the use of the authorization to obtain records from the source identified in the notice within said seven (7) day period, plaintiff's counsel and Merck's counsel shall meet and confer in an attempt to resolve the objection. If counsel are unable to resolve the objection, plaintiff shall file a motion for a protective order within fourteen (14) days of the Merck's notice of intent to use the authorization.

8. Plaintiffs' responses to the PPF shall be treated as answers to interrogatories under Fed. R. Civ. P. 33 and responses to requests for production of documents under Fed. R. Civ. P. 34 and shall be supplemented in accordance with Fed. R. Civ. P. 26.

9. Merck's use of the PPF and Authorizations shall be without prejudice to Merck's right to serve additional discovery.

Merck Profile Forms:

10. Merck will serve upon plaintiffs' counsel of record, as identified in the PPF, a hard copy of a complete and verified MPF in the cardiovascular event cases in the form set forth in Attachment B. An electronic copy of the MPFs shall also be served on Plaintiffs' Liaison Counsel and Co-Lead Counsel, Chris Seeger and Andy Birchfield. To ensure that only the intended recipients have access to the MPFs, Merck shall upload them by selecting "Sealed Electronic" in the "Access" field of the "Documents" tab under the "Filing and Service" option.

11. Merck shall provide a complete and verified MPF ninety (90) days after its receipt of a complete and verified PPF. A "complete" PPF includes all the information and materials contemplated by paragraph 4 of this Order and identifies the name and address of the plaintiff's prescribing physician. If Merck fails to provide a complete and verified MPF within that time, it shall be given notice by e-mail or fax from Plaintiffs' Liaison Counsel and shall be given twenty (20) additional days to cure the deficiency. No other extensions will be granted.

12. Following service of the MPFs in the cardiovascular event cases, the PSC and DSC shall meet and confer regarding the current process and future schedule for service of MPFs in other cases not claiming a cardiovascular event. Should the PSC and DSC not be able to reach an agreement on the process or schedule for service of other MPFs, the PSC or the DSC may raise this issue with the Court. The parties are not obligated to serve additional Profile Forms other than those set forth above absent agreement of the PSC and DSC or Order of this Court.

13. Merck's responses on an MPF shall be treated as answers to

interrogatories under Fed. R. Civ. P. 33 and responses to requests for production of documents under Fed. R. Civ. P. 34 and shall be supplemented in accordance with Fed. R. Civ. P. 26.

14. Plaintiffs' use of the MPF shall be without prejudice to the right of the plaintiffs in a specific case to serve additional discovery.

15. This Order shall be posted on the Court's website for MDL 1657 located at <http://vioxx.laed.uscourts.gov>. Counsel unable to access the Court's website for MDL 1657 may contact the Clerk of Court for information on obtaining a copy of this Order.

New Orleans, Louisiana, this 4th day of August, 2005.

/s/ Eldon E. Fallon
ELDON E. FALLON
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Attachments