

23.7.84  
The Press

## Overseas advice sought on drug

PA Wellington  
An Auckland barrister handling more than 20 complaints about the morning sickness drug, Debendox, will seek advice from a British lawyer handling similar complaints.

The drug is alleged to have caused birth deformities in babies whose mothers have taken it during pregnancy.

The Auckland barrister, Mr Roger McLaren, said he had 20 or 30 cases of women who said the drug had affected their children. The deformities were similar to those caused by the Thalidomide drug.

The women were from throughout New Zealand.

He said he was leaving on a trip to London where he would consult the lawyer handling British complaints.

The "Sydney Daily Telegraph" has reported that a boy, aged eight, was awarded \$US95

million (\$159.6 million) in an American court settlement for defects suffered after his mother took the drug.

The paper said Debendox, known as Bendectin in the United States, was taken off the Australian market four years ago after a Sydney gynaecologist, Dr William McBride, produced evidence of its link with birth defects.

No court action had been taken in Australia against Merrell Dow, the company which produced the drug, but a solicitor for several New South Wales families said the American ruling would strengthen their case.

The newspaper said Merrell Dow was expected to appeal against the American court decision.

Debendox was prescribed to about 30 million women in 21 countries from 1957 to 1984, it said.

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