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NYTimes.com

### Pfizer Begins Settling Painkiller Cases

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By BLOOMBERG NEWS

Pfizer has started settling cases over its Celebrex and Bextra painkillers, a New York lawyer said on Friday.

The company has begun negotiating settlements with individual plaintiff's firms, David S. Ratner, a lawyer with Morelli Ratner, said in a phone interview. "It's been going on for a few weeks," he said.

Mr. Ratner, a member of a steering committee of lawyers for the drugs' users, said he did not know which specific firms were involved in the settlements.

More than 3,000 patients have claimed that the drugs caused heart attacks and strokes. Celebrex, in the same class of medicines as Merck's recalled Vioxx, is Pfizer's third-best-selling drug. The product, which is still on the market, generated \$2.3 billion in sales in 2007, a 12 percent increase from the previous year.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that Pfizer had reached settlements with three law firms representing more than 200 of the thousands who sued over the drugs. Firms have been offered \$40,000 to \$50,000 a client to resolve Bextra cases and as much as \$200,000 a client for Celebrex, The Journal reported, citing an unidentified lawyer.

Pfizer withdrew Bextra in April 2005 after it was tied to a potentially fatal skin condition.

The first Bextra trial, due to begin May 5 in federal court in San Francisco, was postponed until May 29, according to court records.

Ray Kerins, a Pfizer spokesman, declined to comment on pending litigation.