

Biopsy victims await legal aid

PATIENTS disadvantaged by bad biopsies at **Good Health Wanganui** are waiting for a decision on legal aid before going ahead with court action.

Grant Cameron, acting for 18 potential claimants, said a barrister's opinion on whether the claimants had a case had been favourable and a decision on the amount of legal aid was the last pre-court hurdle to be crossed.

Mr Cameron said there were several other potential claimants not yet committed to proceeding because they did not qualify for legal aid.

Almost 50 patients at **Good Health Wanganui** were misdiagnosed seriously in a series of botched biopsies carried out by now-retired pathologist James Burkinshaw.

The mistakes led to six unnecessary mastectomies, an unnecessary hysterectomy, unnecessary medication, 15 cases in which cancer was not diagnosed, two in which the cancer was more serious than diagnosed and other cases that needed more careful followup.

Good Health Wanganui chief executive Ron Janes told a parliamentary select committee earlier this year that only a third of the misdiagnoses occurred after Wanganui Hospital became a crown health enterprise.

Any liability for the remainder, made in the days of the area health board, was the responsibility of the residual health management unit in the Health Ministry, Mr Janes said.

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