

Shock syndrome victim seeks \$1 million settlement

By DONNA LOMAS

The fifth wedding anniversary next week of Peggy and Roger Crusan of Canton will be more than a celebration of their marriage. Peggy almost died last April from toxic shock syndrome (TSS).

The mother of three has drawn national attention after announcing a lawsuit against Kimberly Clark Corp. and International Playtex Inc. She is alleging negligence in the testing and design of tampons that may have led to her near-fatal illness.

She is seeking more than \$1 million in damages in a suit filed in Wayne County Circuit Court. Mrs. Crusan said she used Playtex and Kotex tampons.

A spokesman at Kimberly Clark headquarters in Neenah, Wis., declined comment on the suit. Leonard Burge, director of consumer affairs for Playtex in Paramus, N.J., was unavailable for comment.

MRS. CRUSAN'S voice is calm and clear when she speaks, but her hands tremble and she begins to cry when describing the reaction of her 2-year-old daughter to the ordeal.

"My daughter didn't recognize me. When she saw me in the hospital, she shrank away from me. Every time I talk about this, all I can see is her little face."

Pictures of Mrs. Crusan taken by Wayne County General Hospital doctors during her stay in intensive care show her body swollen and covered with large open sores.

Part of her left hand is scarred, as if from a burn. Her left arm is numb and the grip in her right hand is not as strong as before, Mrs. Crusan said. She lost her eyesight for three days during the two-week hospital stay.

"I've stopped driving at night. My eyesight seems to be gradually getting worse," Mrs. Crusan said.

The 29-year-old woman and her family also suffered disruptive side effects in their family life, she said.

"MY 2-YEAR-OLD daughter wouldn't eat and kept asking where her mother was. Although my 5-year-old understood mom was sick, I knew it upset her and she missed me."

"My 10-month-old baby was looked after by neighbors. My husband had to get back to work after being laid off, and it was hard for him, too. It disrupted my marriage and my family beyond belief."

Mrs. Crusan is still under the care of a doctor, who is watching closely for any side effects or recurrence of the TSS symptoms.

"According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, there is a 30 percent recurrence rate in patients who have had TSS," said attorney J. Douglas Peters. "The risk of developing TSS continues for menstruating women who use any tampon, according to the center," he said.

TSS is likely to occur in women 30 and younger. TSS is characterized by sudden high fever, vomiting, extreme thirst, profuse diarrhea, sometimes accompanied by sore throat, headaches, chest pains and muscle aches. It progresses to a severe drop in blood pressure and shock in 48 hours. Respiratory distress, hair loss, and a sunburn-like rash that later causes the skin to peel accompany symptoms. Death is usually caused by kidney or liver failure.

THE SYMPTOMS of TSS have been around for years, although the name was only applied two years ago, the attorney said. Tampons were first marketed in 1933 — "a cotton swab with a string."

"Tampons have been made to indiscriminately soak up liquid," Peters said. "That not only includes blood, but also mucosal membranes that keep the body protected from bacteria."

One theory on the cause of TSS is that continuous use of tampons dries out the mucosal lining of the vagina and causes tiny abrasions through



PEGGY CRUSAN

which the bacteria enter the bloodstream.

Mrs. Crusan cannot drink any alcohol and her lungs have also been affected, she said.

The night before she was rushed to Wayne County General by the Canton

Rescue Squad, Mrs. Crusan thought she was coming down with the flu.

"I didn't know it was tampons. I didn't know until later when five doctors stood in front of my bed and said so. I was using tampons when I was hospitalized."

That night, Mrs. Crusan remembers asking her husband to buy two bottles of pop for her.

"ALL I wanted was pop, not water; I was so thirsty. When he brought it home, I downed a big glass right away."

Her husband shook her awake early the next morning after discovering that his wife had vomited in her sleep.

"I had a hard time breathing, and my body felt heavy. I was shaking. Roger tried to help me bathe, but I pushed him away."

"I was afraid because I thought I was dying. I knew it. I knew I had to get to a hospital soon," she said.

By the time the ambulance arrived, Mrs. Crusan's blood pressure had dropped, she said. She received oxygen on the way in. She drifted in and out of consciousness for the next eight to 10 days.

Kowaleski promoted

Edward J. Kowaleski of Farmington, has been named supply and distribution manager of Ford Parts and Service Division, Ford Motor Company.

Since November 1979, Kowaleski had been supply manager, supply and distribution office. In his new position, he replaces William A. Howard, who is retiring after 31 years with the company.

Kowaleski graduated from Loyola University in Chicago in 1949. He earned a master's degree at Marquette University, Milwaukee, in 1951 and joined Ford Motor Company that same year as a senior administrative analyst at the company's aircraft engine division in Chicago.

From 1955, he held a number of management positions with Manufacturing Staff, the Automotive Assembly Division and Supply Staff. In 1974, Kowaleski was named director of the production planning and control office of supply staff. In 1977 he became supply manager, Ford Tractor Operations, and later that year was named leader of a task force to dispose of the company's Richier facility in France.



EDWARD KOWALESKI

She was delirious and her skin was too sensitive for anyone to touch without causing extreme pain, Mrs. Crusan said. The open sores developed.

"No one yet knows what kind of residual effects TSS victims suffer from," the attorney said.

MRS. CRUSAN had chest pains, nausea, diarrhea, loss of hair and was irritable during her menstrual period for months before she was hospitalized, she said. She attributed those symptoms to her period, however, not to the use of tampons.

"My hairdresser noticed the loss of my hair, and my husband thought I was going nuts," Mrs. Crusan said. "It was a mess."

After returning from the hospital, Mrs. Crusan was just "glad to be alive."

"I was alive, and I could've been

dead. I had my three babies and my husband."

She discussed the experience with her neighbors. Many stopped using tampons after hearing about her, Mrs. Crusan said, but a few didn't believe she had been poisoned.

"While I was getting better, I remembered they said it was tampons that caused this," Mrs. Crusan said. "I thought no one would do anything for me, I'm going to have to do it."

That disbelief was partly why she filed a lawsuit, she said. Mrs. Crusan was also angry that if the tampons caused her illness, she nearly died from using something she thought was safe.

She visited a legal clinic, and the people there referred her to a lawyer. Although she wanted to avoid publicity at first, now she intends to tell everyone about her near-fatal experience.

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