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Posted by [Bill Marler](#) on December 03, 2009

Paralyzed Woman Sues Cargill in E. coli Lawsuit for \$100,000,000



Stephanie Smith, the twenty-two year old Minnesota dance instructor left paralyzed by a burger tainted with E. coli filed suit today against Cargill, who produced the contaminated meat. Ms. Smith, whose [“The Burger that Shattered Her Life”](#) profile in the New York Times was emailed all over the country, covered by hundreds of media outlets and galvanized legislators to change food laws, attempted mediation with the company, but was unable to come to a fair agreement with them. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of

Stephanie’s guardian, William R. Sieben, in the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota by Bill Marler of the Seattle foodborne illness law firm Marler Clark, and by Jardine, Logan and O’Brien of St. Paul.

“I have handled foodborne illness cases since the Jack in the Box outbreak nearly seventeen years ago, and I have never seen someone sickened this severely and survive,” said Ms. Smith’s attorney, Bill Marler. “This young woman has been on a horrifying and unimaginable journey just to regain basic motor and communication skills. She has lost the ability to walk, to dance, to have a family, to work or care for herself. She is tied to a wheelchair and a pharmacy of medications to address all the medical issues she struggles with. She will likely need multiple kidney transplants. I don’t think it’s possible to adequately convey in a sentence or two the massive challenges Stephanie has faced and continues to face.”

After eating a hamburger produced by Cargill in September 2007, Stephanie became ill and was diagnosed with an E. coli infection. She rapidly deteriorated and was determined to have hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), a complication of E. coli that causes kidney failure. In Stephanie’s case, she also began having seizures, which lead to a coma, where she remained for three months, on a ventilator and dialysis. When doctors were able to bring her out of the coma, the full extent of the injury to her brain, organs, and abilities began to be apparent. Stephanie has spent 2 years in rehabilitation, both inpatient and at home. She is still in a wheelchair, where she will likely remain. She will require constant care and medical attention for the rest of her life. Her medical bills—already more than two million dollars—will continue to add up to tens of millions of dollars.



