

Medinol Says German Patent Office Upholds Stents.

Reuters Health E-Line

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CHICAGO (Reuters) - Israeli heart device maker **Medinol** Ltd. said on Monday a German patent office in Munich upheld its stent patents, defeating efforts by Johnson & Johnson to have them invalidated.

The German patent decision is the latest in a series of European victories for Tel Aviv-based **Medinol**.

Late last month, a German court ruled that Boston Scientific Corp.'s Express coronary stent infringes two patents held by **Medinol** and ordered a unit of Boston Scientific to pull its stents from the German market and pay damages.

Stents are tiny mesh tubes designed to support the walls of arteries that have been cleared of fatty deposits. The Express stent is Boston Scientific's first internally developed stent.

Last week, a Dutch appeals court found the J&J BX Velocity stent from its Cordis unit in Europe infringed **Medinol's** intellectual property.

According to a **Medinol** statement, J&J's Cordis cardiology unit started proceedings to cancel **Medinol's** patent after a 2001 German court ruling found the BX Velocity stent infringed a **Medinol** patent. At that time, **Medinol's** property rights were licensed to Boston Scientific, which marketed **Medinol's** stents.

Medinol in its statement said Boston Scientific joined J&J's efforts to invalidate **Medinol's** patent after it filed suit against Boston Scientific in 2001.

A Boston Scientific spokesman could not confirm the company's participation in the patent office's decision but said the company plans to appeal the German court's ruling.

A J&J spokeswoman said the company was looking into the matter.

In the United States, **Medinol** and Boston Scientific are involved in a dispute over their former supply agreement. Relations between the companies have been strained since 2001 after Boston Scientific's efforts to buy **Medinol** failed.

Boston Scientific and J&J are involved in litigation over patents covering new drug-coated stents that are designed to keep scar tissue from relogging arteries.

Shares of Boston Scientific gained \$1.51, or 2.49 percent to \$62.16 in Monday afternoon trade on the New York Stock Exchange, while J&J's shares gained \$2.17 or 4.18 percent to \$54.05 on the exchange.