Stuttgarter Zeitung

# *Commentary on the Contergan judgement*

# Scandalous

By Hilke Lorenz, 12 April 2018 - 18:03 hrs

**The fact that for decades the pharmaceutical company Grünenthal sat at the table when decisions were taken about the pensions of Contergan victims is scandalous. This must be changed urgently, demands StZ author Hilke Lorenz.**

Cologne – For the victims, the scandal around the sedative Contergan is far from over. In the early 1960s, 5,000 children were born with very severe malformations in their arms and legs. And as if that was not enough, in all these years the manufacturing company Grünenthal has exercised influence over the financial provision for the victims through the Contergan Foundation. Also the way the scandal has been dealt with was scandalous. What else can one call it when, through the power of his office, the pharmaceutical company's corporate lawyer sits as one of the decision-makers in the Medical Commission? This body gives its thumbs-up or thumbs-down to the affected persons regarding the recognition of their status as victims, and it determines the amount of their pensions. Now, in its judgement, the Cologne Higher Regional Court has confirmed this more than unfortunate collusion.

## More say for the victims

Victims' representative Andreas Meyer has thus been proved right. For his accusations, he had been sued by the corporate lawyer. But the day of his triumph must also be the day for a change of direction. The composition of the Foundation must be reconsidered. Furthermore, the Federal Government, which had tolerated this situation through the Family Affairs Ministry, must repair its mistakes. At its heart, this can only mean more say for the victims. Other countries have shown the way.

Picture caption:
Andreas Meyer won his case at the Cologne Higher Regional Court. *Photo: dpa*