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Morgan Lewis Lures Food And Drug Team From K&L Gates

By **Daniel Wilson**

Law360, New York (September 06, 2012, 5:01 PM ET) -- Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP has added a five-partner food, drug and medical device regulatory team to its Washington office from K&L Gates LLP, giving its U.S. Food and Drug Administration and health care practice a strong boost, the firm announced Wednesday.

The team, led by veteran FDA and product safety partner Gary Yingling and U.S. Department of Agriculture and food safety partner Robert Hibbert, also consists of partners Ann Begley, Anthony Pavel and Rebecca Dandeker. The group started at the firm Wednesday.

The move is part of Morgan Lewis' "substantial" growth in its FDA and health care practice group over the past three years, according to Kathy Sanzo, leader of the practice group.

"The arrival of this group signals our commitment to continuing to meet the increasingly complex needs of the life sciences industry — and in particular the food segment of that industry — as ours becomes one of the largest FDA regulatory practices in the U.S. legal market," Sanzo said.

Morgan Lewis has more than 200 attorneys, scientists and technical specialists in its health care and life sciences groups, according to the firm.

Yingling, who had been at K&L Gates for nearly 12 years, told Law360 on Thursday that a strong respect for attorneys he knows at Morgan Lewis and the work they had done had been a factor in the move. The firm has a "long and effective" history in pharmaceutical and food regulatory law, he said.

"It's a very good platform to build on," Yingling said.

The five-attorney team had a very strong bond and working relationship and were pleased to be joining Morgan Lewis, with the firm's litigation background and international platform offering a number of opportunities to the group, Yingling said.

Four of the five partners in the team — Yingling, Pavel, Begley and Dandeker — focus on FDA-related issues.

Yingling, a former in-house counsel at the FDA and the former head of nonprofit the Food & Drug Law Institute before entering private practice, deals with a wide range of issues, such as food and drug safety, product labeling, clinical research and drug application issues, before both the FDA and other governmental bodies, such as the USDA and U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Pavel's expertise is in the preparation of FDA submissions for food and drug products and medical device-related regulatory matters, including e-health and telemedicine issues, having represented clients before several governmental agencies. He also serves as general counsel for the Enzyme Technical Association, which promotes and advocates for the enzyme preparation industry.

Begley's practice involves counseling clients on food, drug, medical device and cosmetic product regulatory issues, such the preparation of new drug applications, product labeling and advertising, with a particular focus on issues involving clinical practice, such as homeopathic and drug clinical trial issues.

Dandeker counsels clients on both issues involving pharmaceuticals and other consumer products, such as dietary supplements, alternative therapies and cosmetics. These issues include regulatory and policy matters, for instance rulemaking disputes and compliance, enforcement, and labeling and advertising matters, with a particular focus on drug approvals.

While Hibbert also deals with FDA issues, as a former USDA attorney, his practice focuses mostly on USDA matters. These include food safety issues like new product development, labeling, advertising, recalls and technology to enhance food safety and security, as well as issues affecting the agricultural industry, such as animal health, meat processing and the regulation of transgenic crops.

Stephen Paul Mahinka, chair of Morgan Lewis' life sciences and health care interdisciplinary group, praised the addition of the team.

"As class action litigation involving food claims and food safety are expected to grow rapidly, and as the market continues to see an increase in life sciences transactional activity, this team will be an asset to our clients and the firm," Mahinka said.

--Editing by Andrew Park.