

Facebook sidelines contested Merck profile page

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German pharmaceutical and chemical firm Merck KGaA last week called for answers from California-based Facebook after losing control of the www.facebook.com/Merck page at the leading social network.

The group was "very surprised" to discover that its Facebook page contained information on a similarly named US company, according to Merck KGaA spokesman Gangolf Schrimpf.

"The transfer of the vanity URL Facebook.com/Merck from Merck KGaA to Merck & Co. was due to an administrative error," Facebook told AFP on Monday. "We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused."

Merck KGaA has lodged a complaint with the Supreme Court of the State of New York setting out its intention to take legal action against Facebook.

"Because Facebook is an important marketing device, the page is of great value to Merck and its misappropriation is causing harm," said the complaint.

The Merck Facebook page will be unavailable until the vying companies agree which should get it, the source told AFP.

Both Mercks are free to create new Facebook pages titled in ways that reflect the names of the companies.

In March, 2010, the German firm signed a deal with [Facebook](#) for exclusive rights to the page but was astonished to find in October this year that it had lost administrative control and page content related to US competitor [Merck](#).

The two firms are distantly related, but have been legally separate entities since the 1919 Treaty of Versailles after World War I when the group was split in two as part of a reparations package against Germany.

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