

## Where's the Punishment for Lying About OxyContin?

*While Merck & Co. have to pay out \$4.85 billion over Vioxx, OxyContin manufacturer Purdue Pharma executives agreed to pay only a \$634.5 million fine, even after admitting in a federal lawsuit to making false and misleading statements that OxyContin was not as addictive or as likely to be abused as other pain medications. The truth, according to Steve Hayes, Director of Novus Medical Detox Center, is that OxyContin is highly addictive, and many individuals who were given the drug for moderate pain management suffered life-ruining dependence and/or addiction.*

Pasco County, Florida (PRWEB) December 10, 2007 -- On November 9, 2007, in front of a U.S. District judge in New Orleans, big-pharma giant Merck & Co., Inc agreed to pay \$4.85 billion to settle about 27,000 lawsuits filed over allegations that the COX-2 inhibitor Vioxx -- which the company was forced to withdraw from the market in 2004 -- caused deaths or injuries to patients taking the drugs.

Today, a challenge was issued by Steve Hayes, director of Novus Medical Detox Center in Pasco County, Florida, that a similar settlement should be pursued against Purdue Pharma, manufacturer of OxyContin, to directly compensate patients whose lives have been adversely affected by this drug.

Merck failed to reveal information that patients on Vioxx were suffering heart attacks, strokes and deaths until the public outcry forced the withdrawal of the drug from the market. Likewise, according to Hayes, the statistics on OxyContin addiction, overdoses and deaths have been hidden from public view.

It is estimated that Merck's settlement will amount to about \$100,000 per injured patient or deceased patient's family.

In comparison, in a federal lawsuit brought against Purdue in Virginia in May of this year, OxyContin manufacturer Purdue Pharma and its top executives agreed to pay a fine of \$634.5 million, most of which will go to state and federal agencies. Purdue admitted to making false and misleading statements when they claimed that OxyContin was not as addictive or as likely to be abused as other pain medications. The truth, according to Hayes, is that OxyContin is highly addictive and many individuals who were given the drug for moderate pain management have suffered life-ruining dependence and/or addiction.

According to Mr. Hayes, the Director of Novus Medical Detox Center of Pasco County, LLC, where numerous OxyContin victims are medically detoxed, "It is very unfortunate that only approximately \$130 million of this fine has been allocated to individuals who have sued Purdue Pharma. If the tens of thousands of victims, who Purdue has admitted to having lied to, were to share in the settlement, there would only be a few dollars for each one, certainly not enough to aid these individuals in reclaiming their lives from this addiction. What should happen is that Purdue should be required to pay a similar settlement as Merck."

Hayes continued, "We see first hand the misery of OxyContin addiction and physical dependence caused by the unfortunate reliance by our patients on the representations of this drug company that seems only interested in profits--not the welfare of the public. If Purdue was forced to pay the costs of a good medical detox and then a good rehab, they would then be taking responsibility for their acts. This would not replace the ruined marriages and broken families, but it would give the OxyContin victims a chance to live normal lives."

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### Contact Information

**Steve Hayes**  
Novus Medical Detox Center  
<http://www.novusdetox.com>  
727-213-1741

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