

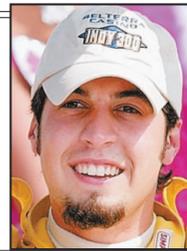


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INSIDE A PAINKILLER'S SALES PITCH

As abuse grew, an OxyContin rep found himself trying to calm doctors' fears

By Charles B. Camp
HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER

HAMILTON, Ohio — As OxyContin abuse became big news in 2001, Dr. Ghassan Haj-Hamed grew increasingly concerned.

Colleagues were giving him grief over the amount of the potent painkiller he was prescribing, he told OxyContin salesman Shane Foster over lunch in early February.

Foster reassured Haj-Hamed, a top client, "that he was doing the right thing," according to a memo the salesman wrote afterward.

But Haj-Hamed was actually doing wrong, a federal agent would later say.

Even as the two talked that dreary afternoon in Cincinnati, law officers in Northern Kentucky were focusing on the doctor as a major source of illegal OxyContin and other prescription drugs in the region, according to a federal agent's affidavit filed in a Cincinnati court.

Today, Haj-Hamed's Kentucky and Ohio medical licenses are suspended, and liens have been placed on about \$1 million worth of property by federal prosecutors, who are investigating his prescribing practices.

Haj-Hamed says that he is innocent and that he expects to get his licenses and property back.

But his problems illustrate the tightrope that Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, walked as it pushed sales ever higher in the face of a worsening abuse crisis.

Drug regulators, law officers, addiction experts and others have contended that Purdue oversold OxyContin right from the start in 1996, causing an oversupply that spilled into illegal markets. Purdue has vigorously denied that claim.

But although the company's advertising and promotional materials are subject to regulatory scrutiny, there's no oversight of what its hundreds of sales representatives said to the thousands of doctors they met repeatedly, one-on-one, in those years.

Now a glimpse of how one OxyContin rep built and protected his piece of the market has emerged from a little-noticed lawsuit pending against Purdue in Butler County, Ohio.

See PITCH, A10

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Behind an OxyContin crisis

This special report examines the selling of OxyContin, a painkiller hailed as a wonder drug, but linked to dozens of overdose deaths among abusers. Documents from the drug's maker show it was promoted to select doctors known for writing many prescriptions for pain pills — with troubling results in one case. Find previous reports online at www.kentucky.com.

ON PAGE A11

Battling public perception

OxyContin's maker takes a hard line on fighting plaintiff's claims in court — and wins.

RIPPED FROM THE COURT RECORD

'Make sure he stays on our side'

These excerpts from "call notes" written by an OxyContin sales rep have been filed in an Ohio lawsuit that claims Purdue Pharma oversold the drug. The company says the informal notes reflect the jargon of sales, not inappropriate sales pressure. Names have been blurred; "NC" stands for "next call."

Pain clinic and Dr. [REDACTED] comments in the paper. NC -- get him to help push even more Oxy.

Long lunch. to address issues about colleagues giving him grief about writing too much Oxycontin. We addresses his concerns and gave reassurance that he was doing the right thing. NC -- follow up on having Dr. [REDACTED] meet with him to assure they are doing the right thing. Cont. to pat on back for doing the right thing.

Round table discussion to keep him positive on Oxy. NC -- keep seeing how we can help him to feel comfortable using Oxy. GET [REDACTED] IDEAS IN PLACE.

Discussed Oxy in the news again. Threatened to not write anymore. NC -- make sure he does not do that. use in right person.

Prod. adv. [REDACTED] a new pharmacist has a problem with Dr. [REDACTED]. Keep trying to show her he is doing the right thing. NC -- cont. to follow up and make sure she feels more comfortable with what he is doing.

Prod. adv. and letter issue. NC -- make sure he stays on our side.

Moved her up a status again. [REDACTED] stand up. NC -- needs to be pushed to use more and reminded more often, but will than move in the right direction.

Great discussion. NC -- keep smoozing.

U.S. to up pressure on North Korea

Multination naval exercise scheduled for next month

GOAL IS TRAINING TO INTERDICT ARMS

By Steven R. Weisman
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration, while preparing for talks soon with North Korea, is also stepping up military pressure with plans for a joint naval exercise next month to train for interdicting at sea arms and other materials that are being transported to and from the North.

Administration officials and Asian diplomats said the exercise would be carried out in the Coral Sea off northeastern Australia in September and that it was officially described as directed at no one country. A principal intention, however, was to send a sharp signal to North Ko-

rea to dismantle its nuclear weapons program, they said.

The next round of talks with North Korea is planned for Aug. 27 in Beijing, with six nations taking part. The United States has been working with its allies to decide which items to present, from economic benefits to security guarantees, that would be provided if North Korea agreed to shut down its program verifiably and irreversibly.

At the same time, the United States has stepped up efforts with Japan, South Korea and nine other nations to interdict ships doing business with North Korea. Last December,

See KOREA, A7

Could freshman year roommate misery be a thing of the past?

NEW SERVICE MIRRORS COMPUTER DATING

By Tamar Lewin
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Ankith Kamaraju has never met Zachary Manfredi, but he is confident that on Aug. 23, when they move into the room they will share as freshmen at Emory University, they will

get along smoothly. At least, that's what the latest in computer match-making predicts.

This summer, for the first time, Emory let freshmen pick their own roommates through an online roommate-selection system that works on the same principles as computer dating.

Students, using screen names to hide their identities, posted profiles of themselves detailing personality attributes, work habits, music and food preferences, and answers to questions like whether they hoped to "do almost everything" with their roommate or "lead separate but compatible lives."

Manfredi, who is from Michigan, was in Kamaraju's top 5 list of closest matches. "I think we matched on 70-some

See ROOMMATES, A5



AMANDA ODESKI | STAFF

Alissa Brandenburg of Winchester, left, and Jessica Robertson of Paris have known each other for four years, but will be sharing their Morehead State dorm room with two other freshmen.

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INFORMATION FOR LIFE



PARTLY SUNNY

Chance of precipitation less than 20%. Weather, D8

85 | 62
HIGH | LOW

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Using alot keep going in the right direction. NC -- double check on any use in combo's.

Said had to stop using Oxy because of pts. she was attracting and is not going to use at all. Pushed using in long time pts of hers, and said she had to stick to that policy. NC -- try to make contact with [redacted], she said she would refer if he wants them.

Great lunch. NC make sure he doesn't cut back his usage.

PUSHING TO PRESCRIBE

THE SELL

Florida inquiry reveals vigorous tactics

Though sales flew past every goal that Purdue Pharma set, OxyContin marketers continued to devise ways to generate more prescriptions, according to company documents in the Florida attorney general's files.

One objective proposed for 1998: "attach an emotional aspect to non-cancer pain so physicians treat it more seriously and aggressively." A tactic: Every month, mail 10,000 "Pain of the Month" post-cards to doctors.

The next year, marketers urged more focus on the elderly, injury victims and surgical patients.

For 2001, they called for nearly tripling the number of targeted doctors to 157,000, and for sales reps to make 1.2 million calls on them.

The marketing documents made scores of proposals for the years from 1996 to 2002, and it couldn't be determined which ideas were finally implemented.

But they illustrate an energetic sales effort. "Purdue Pharma's corporate goal is to be one of the top 10 pharmaceutical companies by 2010" measured both by sales and image within the industry and community, the 2001 marketing proposal declared.

One enterprising suggestion for 1996 was to commission a Gallup poll on untreated pain to create a "media hook" that would spawn news coverage of OxyContin. Planners called that idea a "classic problem-solution strategy to create a need."

Yet another plan was for Purdue's marketing partner, Abbott Laboratories, to give free patient-activated intravenous drug pumps to hospitals that put 100 patients on OxyContin after surgery. Purdue announced the plan internally in 1997, but Abbott never launched it, Ohio court records show.

Florida began investigating Purdue's marketing in 2001 but quit last year when the company agreed to give the state \$2 million to fight illicit pill use.

CHARLES B. CAMP

THE PRESCRIBERS

Ohio doctor has had trouble in Kentucky too

HAMILTON, Ohio — Legal problems have also stalked the doctor who in early 2001 was the No. 2 prescriber of OxyContin in salesman Shane Foster's territory northwest of Cincinnati, court records show.

Dr. Bruce Worrell was sued in Kentucky in July 2001 over the death of a Clay County man a year earlier; the suit claimed he died of a drug overdose. Worrell had prescribed OxyContin at his Cincinnati office to Elva Hubbard the day before Hubbard died, the lawsuit claimed. The suit also named Purdue Pharma, the drug's maker, as a defendant.

For the six months between December 2000 and May 2001, Worrell was the No. 2 OxyContin prescriber in Purdue's sales territory that includes Butler County, Ohio, according to records in a separate lawsuit there.

Worrell couldn't be reached for comment, but at the time he denied any wrongdoing related to Hubbard's death. A federal judge in London eventually dismissed the complaint, saying the court lacked jurisdiction. The judge later dismissed the case against Purdue, too.

But Worrell's troubles weren't over. In January this year, he was indicted in Cincinnati on charges of obtaining a dangerous drug, Vicodin, by deception. Ohio regulators subsequently suspended his license for at least 180 days.

Scott Crosswell, Worrell's lawyer in the latest case, noted that the charges had nothing to do with OxyContin and said he expects them to be dismissed. Worrell has admitted that he abused drugs and is enrolled in a treatment program, Hamilton County court records show. He has asked the court to accept that over a conviction.

CHARLES B. CAMP

PITCH | Pharmacists' worries also on sales rep's agenda

From Page A1

The case file contains "call notes" that Shane Foster wrote after seeing doctors — notes that contain reminders such as "needs to be pushed to use more" and "remember to always sell."

Foster also wrote of trying to calm worried pharmacists, some of whom were contacting regulators with fears about doctors' OxyContin prescriptions.

And he wrote over and over of reassuring doctors such as Haj-Hamed to "do the right thing" and continue prescribing the pills.

Foster, whose territory borders Cincinnati, did not return messages seeking comment. Robin Hogen, Purdue's vice president for public affairs based in Connecticut, said it would violate corporate policy for Foster to talk to the news media and that he could lose his job if he did. Saying that he was speaking for the salesman, Hogen called Foster's actions appropriate.

In a 151-page deposition he gave in the lawsuit, Foster depicted his job as more missionary than mercenary; he spoke of giving "some dignity in life back" to people who suffer chronic pain.

He described himself as a facilitator for health-care professionals who were fighting a tide of untreated misery.

"I want them to use any pain agent. And if they can use OxyContin, great," he testified.

Foster began working for Purdue in late 1998, bringing a degree in nursing and eight years' experience at three top drug companies.

In 2000, sales in his territory north of Cincinnati nearly doubled, and he earned about \$140,000, some \$90,000 of it bonus pay.

Foster, who is not a defendant in the case, has been summoned as a witness because he "typifies the entire marketing scheme" that Purdue and a contractor used, said Scott Frederick, a Hamilton lawyer who represents people who claim they were harmed by the drug.

The suit claims that Purdue and Abbott Laboratories, the giant drug company Purdue hired to help sell OxyContin, played down the drug's

risks, causing many Ohio residents to become dependent on pills they didn't want or need.

"Corporate pushing," Frederick called it last year during a hearing after which the case became the only certified OxyContin class action in the country.

Purdue and Abbott say that many of their sales strategies are distorted or misrepresented in the suit.

Doctor under suspicion

In February and March 2001, after their lunch together, Foster dropped by to steady Haj-Hamed three more times, the salesman's notes show.

At the same time, according to the federal affidavit, the FBI quietly began investigating the doctor's activities at a

"Your friendly neighborhood pharmacist looks over his bifocals and says, 'Ah-ha. I see you are on OxyContin. What's going on here?'"

Robin Hogen

Purdue's vice president for public affairs

Bellevue clinic, one of four in Kentucky and two in Ohio with which he was affiliated. By year's end, agents were conducting an extensive undercover operation at another office in Falmouth, the affidavit shows.

Last Sept. 25, Pendleton County deputies stopped Haj-Hamed's car outside of Falmouth and arrested him on numerous state charges of prescribing drugs without a lawful purpose. The license suspensions in Kentucky and Ohio followed, as did a civil lawsuit by a Campbell County woman who claims Haj-Hamed contributed to the drug-related death of her sister last October.

In an interview, the doctor said his arrest wasn't legitimate because agents lied and faked pain to trick him into prescribing pills. A state prosecutor dropped those charges in March, saying federal authorities had asserted jurisdiction over the case. Their investigation is still open, said Haj-Hamed's lawyer, Robert Blau of Cold Spring. He predicted his client would be cleared.

The wrongful death suit is baseless,

Haj-Hamed said. And he said he's fighting the Kentucky medical board in administrative and court proceedings. Ohio's suspension is based on Kentucky's action.

Haj-Hamed expressed no regrets about prescribing OxyContin to his patients or about the drug salesman who encouraged him to do so. Foster "was always fair and honest" and produced documents to back up his promotion of the drug, Haj-Hamed said.

It's unclear whether Foster got sales credit for the Cincinnati doctor's Kentucky prescriptions. There's no evidence that he knew that Haj-Hamed was under investigation.

But it's clear that he knew the doctor was a busy prescriber of pain medicines.

'Get him to help push more Oxy'

In working his territory, Foster used company-supplied reports that showed the amounts of various pain drugs prescribed by each doctor on his list.

One such printout in the court file for early 2001 named 115 "A-1" candidates. The top prescriber of all types of painkillers was Haj-Hamed, who averaged an estimated 800 prescriptions a month; the No. 2 doctor wrote about 500.

Foster called on Haj-Hamed a dozen times in a six-month period. He visited another doctor, who ran two offices, 44 times, the printout showed.

Hastily written notes from some of his calls on those and other doctors suggest a consistent message: Treat more patients with OxyContin, do it earlier in the process, and stick to your guns once you do.

In March 2000, Foster dashed off this reminder for his next call on one doctor: "keep him writing more." Two weeks later after a return visit, he wrote, "expand use." Two days after that, "set plan for high use."

He told himself to get some doctors to "use sooner" or "dose higher." He concluded that one physician "needs to be pushed to use more and reminded more often."

Foster translated many of those comments in his deposition.

Expand use? "Yeah, I'd like him to help people that are in pain." Use sooner? Switch to OxyContin instead of piling on other pills with ingredients that cause side effects. Dose higher? Use one bigger OxyContin tablet instead of two smaller ones.

As for the doctor who "needs to be pushed," Foster said, "I wanted her to

realize that OxyContin was an equal choice" to taking several rival pills a day.

But at one point, he let his words stand.

"Get him to help push even more Oxy," he wrote after leaving one doctor's office. When questioned about that memo, Foster simply replied, "Yep," and "That's what I wrote."

Hogen, Purdue's public affairs executive, said the use of the word "push" was "unfortunate," and said that the sales rep probably meant, "I need to work harder" to help the doctor help his patients.

Foster's call-note comments are "shorthand — the vernacular of a salesman" and shouldn't be over-interpreted, Hogen said. Purdue lawyers have also objected to their use in court, labeling them "snippets of notes selectively culled" from his files.

Damage control

In April 2001, a week after news broke that the Butler County sheriff had charged a dozen people with OxyContin abuse and trafficking, one of Foster's leading prescribers began to doubt himself, the notes show.

The doctor "threatened to not write anymore," Foster wrote. "Make sure he does not do that," he reminded himself.

In his deposition, Foster later said that the doctor had just been thinking aloud. He said he told the physician to go by "what he knows is right and not what he reads in the paper."

The call notes show that the salesman also wrestled repeatedly with what he short-handed as "pharm issues" or a "pharm problem" — matters involving local pharmacies.

He visited one pharmacist whom he suspected of "turning in" a doctor to state regulators over OxyContin prescriptions. Foster said in his deposition that he wanted to know whether the druggist made such calls whenever he saw prescriptions for doses of a certain size.

He said he dropped in on pharmacists five to 10 times in relation to another doctor, hoping to "build a teamwork approach" so the pharmacists would call the doctor instead of regulators with any concerns.

Druggists sometimes reacted negatively to the large doses of OxyContin called for in some prescriptions, he said, because they didn't understand that the narcotic inside is released slowly over time, unlike other pain pills.

Purdue's Hogen defended the visits as opportunities to offer pharmacists needed education about OxyContin.

He said that some patients were "being stigmatized like junkies" when they presented OxyContin prescriptions.

"Your friendly neighborhood pharmacist looks over his bifocals and says, 'Ah-ha. I see you are on OxyContin. What's going on here? Are you selling it out of the station wagon to kids at school?'" Hogen said.

'Abused by bad people'

To Haj-Hamed, OxyContin is a good medicine that has been "abused by bad people." The 37-year-old practitioner said he first prescribed it in 1999, two years after he was licensed in Kentucky.

Purdue's "message" then, he said, was that OxyContin could restore an active lifestyle to a pain patient with almost no side effects and that anyone taking more than two competitors' pills a day was a candidate.

He began prescribing OxyContin with "great success." But by early 2001, "the media made it like a doctor who writes the prescription and the patient who takes OxyContin are like drug pusher and drug addict," he said. He scaled back by 20 percent.

Some other doctors, hearing of lawsuits, patient arrests, suspicious pharmacists and colleagues' warnings, referred pain patients to someone else, he said.

Foster calmed the waters, Haj-Hamed said, advising him to closely follow published guidelines on prescribing narcotics, and arranging meetings with other doctors who believed in the drug.

In his deposition, Foster said his talks with Haj-Hamed were aimed at "reassuring him that it is important to fight that battle and be willing to help people" with untreated pain.



FALMOUTH OUTLOOK

Dr. Ghassan Haj-Hamed was charged with prescribing drugs without a lawful purpose last September. The state has dropped the charges; a federal investigation is still open. Haj-Hamed is also challenging the suspension of his medical license.





ANDREW SULLIVAN | STAMFORD ADVOCATE FILE PHOTO

Purdue Pharma executives David Haddox, Maurie Temple (now retired), Michael Friedman, Diana Lenkowsky and Robin Hogen in March 2000 in Stamford, Conn.

OxyContin
Purdue Pharma's
blockbuster narcotic

THE COMPANY

Oxy vaulted Purdue
into the big time

Purdue Pharma's modern roots date to 1952 and a tiny Manhattan company called Purdue Frederick that mostly sold Gray's Glycerine Tonic Compound, a remedy for numerous ills. When brothers Raymond and Mortimer Sackler, both doctors, bought it that year, sales were \$22,000. Today, Connecticut-based Purdue Pharma and its affiliates comprise an international enterprise entirely owned by trusts that the Sacklers established. Its main product is OxyContin.

A SNAPSHOT

- Purdue added laxative and earwax products in the 1950s, an antiseptic in 1966, and its first pain pill and an asthma drug in 1984. Sales broke \$100 million in 1987.
- When it introduced OxyContin, Purdue was a \$288 million firm; last year, revenues exceeded \$1.4 billion. It has three U.S. factories and two research facilities.
- The brothers who bought Purdue, and a third one, the late Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, are well known philanthropists and patrons of the arts. Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington bear the Sackler name.

What is OxyContin?

OxyContin relieves moderate to severe extended pain. The tablets contain oxycodone, a chemical relative of opium, in concentrated doses. The drug is released over 12 hours; abusers defeat the time-release mechanism by crushing the pills, often snorting the powder or mixing it with liquid and injecting it.

'WE WILL NOT GIVE IN'

Purdue fights Oxy suits tooth-and-nail — and wins

By Charles B. Camp

HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER

HAMILTON, Ohio — "It's going to be a war," Louisville attorney David Ewing predicted recently about a lawsuit he's pursuing in Butler County common pleas court.

Lawyerly exaggeration, but forgivable given the opponent he has chosen. Ewing is on a team of attorneys that is trying to prove that Purdue Pharma over-promoted the painkiller OxyContin and failed to warn patients and doctors of its risks.

He's doing better than most others in his shoes — 290 such cases are pending in state and federal courts nationally, including seven in Kentucky. The Butler County suit is the only one so far to achieve class action status.

That means that if it reaches trial and Purdue loses, thousands of Ohio residents could be in line for a piece of a damage award.

But Ewing's odds aren't great. Purdue has vigorously denied any improper marketing. And in court it has exhibited a tough, no-compromise stance right from the very first suit two years ago.

The company publicizes the fact that it has never lost an OxyContin case, never settled one and never paid anything in fees or compensation. In fact, no case has ever made it to trial, partly because Purdue works hard to win early.

About three dozen cases have died in preliminary skirmishing — many at the hands of the lawyers who filed them, because defeat loomed.

The company has even argued against letting some plaintiffs throw in the towel when they wanted to, on the theory that a judge's dismissal would send a louder victory message.

Those who sue "hoping for a quick settlement will be sorely disappointed," promised Howard Udell, Purdue's general counsel, following one dismissal.

"We will not give in to such suits."

That hard line reflects a belief that a settlement — or worse, a trial loss — will spawn waves of new suits, said Purdue spokesman Tim Bannon. The number of outstanding cases is creeping up as it is.

Company officials also claim a high-

er motive for their stance. They say that the lawsuits, which focus on the risk of dependence or addiction, scare legitimate OxyContin patients out of taking the medication that their doctors order.

"People who suffer from accident and disease are victimized twice when baseless lawsuits interfere" with their treatment, said Dr. Paul Goldenheim, an executive vice president, at the end of last month as Purdue announced six new dismissals.

Opposing lawyers frame the conflict — and their frustration — in equally grand terms.

"It's unfortunate that the courts have not seen the damage that Purdue is doing to the American public," said Annette Morgan-White, a Manchester attorney who has been in several suits.

"The company is winning, and it's unbelievable."

She calls OxyContin a highly addictive drug that should be used only to comfort dying patients.

Class action

The Butler County suit, filed in July 2001, moved slowly until August 2002, when a court ruled that it could cover all people in Ohio who believed the drug injured them physically or emotionally.

A month ago, an appeals court upheld that decision and put the case back on course toward trial. Purdue said that it will appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court.

In its ruling, the appeals court ordered one change: It excluded anyone who obtained OxyContin illegally.

The Butler County case names as class representatives one man, who cites 45 years as a preacher, and two women — one a 79-year-old retired plant worker and the other a former nurse's assistant. All say they suffered damages after being prescribed OxyContin legally.

Lawyers who filed the case said they had consciously screened out abusers, an issue that has hurt other OxyContin suits. Nonetheless, LaDonna Howland, the former nursing assistant, has an extensive police record, including crimes related to drug abuse.

In court documents, she claimed that she committed the drug crimes after a doctor prescribed OxyContin for pain from a car wreck and she became hooked.

She pleaded guilty to 10 counts of obtaining pills illegally and later completed a drug treatment program.

"My whole life centered around my ability to obtain this drug to feed my dependency," she said. At the time, she crushed and snorted the pills for maximum effect, her affidavit said.

Defense lawyers zeroed in on Howland's past.

"LaDonna Howland is a convicted felon," declared one document. Another listed a record of 26 illegal acts that included lesser offenses of disorderly conduct and driving without a license.

"It was a very rough time of my life," Howland said in an interview earlier this year. She said she now treats her back pain "with Aleve and willpower."

Opposing lawyers have been aggressive as well.

"What are they afraid of?" Cincinnati

litigator Stanley Chesley demanded during a hearing last year. He was complaining that Purdue's lawyers were slow to deliver documents that he said he was entitled to see.

He accused the company of "a cover-up" and playing "hide-and-seek" and twice described Purdue as a corporate drug dealer.

Nonetheless, the game isn't yet as rough as it has been in some cases.

Messy litigation

In Portsmouth, Ohio, in early 2001, lawyer Joseph Hale filed the country's first OxyContin suit. It was dismissed about a year and a half later.

But in between, Hale, not Purdue, wound up on the defensive as the company argued that he should be punished personally for a legal tactic he tried.

Hale filed a motion to stop Purdue from using the knowledge of several prominent former law enforcement figures it had retained.

One was the late Joseph Famularo, former U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

Famularo had once compared rampant OxyContin abuse in Kentucky to a "locust plague." He became an unpaid Purdue consultant after leaving the federal job.

Hale argued that Famularo and the others were privy to law enforcement information that would give Purdue an improper advantage. Purdue countered that Hale was in violation of a federal court rule that bars frivolous filings.

The judge didn't buy either argument, and Hale eventually had the case dismissed after one of his key witnesses died from car-accident injuries. Purdue said it didn't file a formal complaint against Hale because it essentially won the case.

High feelings linger, however. In response to a question recently, Purdue spokesman Tim Bannon called Hale's tactic "preposterous."

Hale didn't return a call seeking comment. But in an interview two days after the dismissal, he labeled Purdue's victory "hollow" and said it had only proven that a giant corporation with "high-priced, first-rate law firms" can beat a "small-town lawyer" and the family of a drug-overdose victim.