

# [Pharma purdue and the opioid crisis](https://assignbuster.com/pharma-purdue-and-the-opioid-crisis/)

The first step of our decision making model is to determine all the facts in the case being studied and judged. This paper will dive into the issue currently at hand with Purdue Pharma, a privately held drug company and their lawsuit with the state of Oklahoma, which was taken to court in March of this year, among many others. Purdue Pharma is known for their most famous product, OxyContin, which is a prescription painkiller. Purdue Pharma was founded in 1892 by doctors John Purdue Gray and and George Frederick Bingham. It was in 1952 that the company was sold to brothers Raymond and Mortimer Sackler, whose descendants are owners of said company to this day (Wikipedia). Purdue Pharma is renowned as being the pioneer in developing medication to reduce pain, something we know today to be simple painkillers we can pick up at a convenience. In 1995, Purdue Pharma’s most popular and groundbreaking drug OxyContin was released to the world. With this came a push for the company to have doctors aggressively praise the pill as being a safe choice to take on a 12 hour cycle. This marketing tactic worked as the people were convinced the drug was safe to consume frequently and allowed this to become one of Purdue Pharma’s biggest products. Unfortunately, the business’ choice to aggressively market the product as safe would hurt the general public due to a highly addictive and dangerous ingredient: oxycodone.

OxyContin contains oxycodone as its only active ingredient. When released in 1995, it was lauded as being a “ breakthrough, long lasting narcotic” that would help patients dealing with an intense pain (Keefe). The drug was a huge market success for the company making well over thirty five billion dollars in revenue. However, oxycodone is a dangerous additive to be using as it is similar in chemical structure to “ heroin, which is up to twice as powerful as morphine” (Keefe). Many doctors are averse to prescribing opioids likes these as they are highly addictive. To counter this precedent, Purdue Pharma hired out doctors and paid for research in an attempt to convince the public that the opioid crisis was no more than a myth and that their drug would be able to treat them for many conditions. With this marketing pushed on the public, millions of people to date have purchased OxyContin believing it to be a safe choice to treat their conditions.

From 1999 onwards, there have been over 200, 000 deaths attributed to overdoses involving OxyContin. In fact, in 2017 there were 74, 000 deaths caused by drug overdose with 40, 000 of them being caused by opioids. It should also be noted that those who get hooked to opioids are likely to find themselves taking solace in other drugs including heroin. Today, multiple states have taken action against Purdue Pharma for their false marketing and downplaying of the addictive nature of OxyContin. Nearly 1, 600 lawsuits have been filed against the company and Oklahoma is one of the first to be taken to court in March of 2019. Attorney General Mike Hunter filed in June of 2017 alleging that Purdue helped to ignite the opioid crisis (Bebinger). He sought 20 billion dollars in damages to the state. Although this case ended with Purdue Pharma paying 270 million to the state for funds of research and treatment in the state, they are still selling the harmful drug.

The second step of the decision making model is to determine the dimensions of right and wrong concerning those involved. First, we should ask whether it was right or wrong for Purdue Pharma to market their product as being a safe and non addictive product when they clearly knew it wasn’t. We have to decide whether this was an immoral action or not. Another dimension we should delve into is if it was justifiable for Mike Hunter to claim Purdue Pharma was at an entire fault for the opioid crisis within Oklahoma. We should consider that there may be factors outside of just this drug that caused it. Finally, we should consider the ethics of the doctors who were paid off by Purdue Pharma and if it was moral for them to take pay in exchange for not considering their patients’ health. We must look at what may be right or wrong within cases in order to assess biases properly.

For the third step of the decision making model, we must assess every stakeholder.

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| Stakeholder  | Their Stake in the Case  |
| General Attorney Mike Hunter  | They would like to see justice brought to the people of Oklahoma. With reparations from the company, they could work on rebuilding and nursing the people affected by this crisis.  |
| Purdue Pharma  | They would like to continue marketing and selling OxyContin. Without this drug, their company would assuredly go under with all the bad press and their other products might fail to come off shelves.  |
| Consumers/Patients  | They are now aware of the harm being brought by these drugs and would like to see alternatives. It isn’t right for them to not have known what was going on with their drugs being given to them.  |
| Workers of Purdue Pharma  | They would like to continue working. They have their own lives to attend to and need a salary to fund it.  |
| Opioid Addicts  | They are the ones hurt the most by this crisis. The reparations that would be paid out should go to these people as they try to build their lives once more and research will let them know action is being taken to prevent and treat this awful addiction.  |
| Family of Opioid Addicts (alive or deceased)  | They would like to see justice brought for their family members who have fallen victim to addiction. For those deceased, they should receive some compensation in some form and want to see the crisis being handled to prevent others from hurting in the same way.  |
| Doctors  | They want to supply their patients with the best medication for their health and having not to sell OxyContin would of course aid in this. It would alleviate the guilt of selling a harmful product in some sense as well.  |

In this step, it is important to also assess my own bias. I have not been affected by the opioid crisis in anyway as my family nor I have been addicted to any kind of painkiller or drug.

In the fourth step of our decision making model, we must delineate and create alternative courses of action. These solutions should be feasible ways to solve our case. The first possible solution/outcome is that Purdue Pharma chooses not to comply in any way and continues the same practices with OxyContin. This would mean they continue to pay off doctors and push their marketing scheme. Another possible solution/outcome is that Purdue Pharma is forced to openly admit on their products that it can be addictive and that consumers should be cautious. This means each product will be labeled accordingly to their level of potential danger. Finally, Purdue Pharma could continue to sell their product but not be allowed to persuade doctors with monetary gain to promote the product. This means doctors will no longer be forced to tell customers that the product is safe when they are aware it isn’t.

In the fifth step of our decision making model, we must assess how the stakeholders would respond to each alternative presented.

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| Stakeholder  | Responses  |
| General Attorney Mike Hunter  | Act 1: Without any action taken, the crisis will simply worsen overtime and Hunter will not be able to combat for the sake of Oklahoma. Act 2: They will be okay with this situation as now the public will likely take note of their products and Hunter can focus on helping those already affected instead of prevention. Act 3: Same as Act 2 as doctors now prevent people from getting a hold of the drugs and misusing it. Hunter will be able to take funds and funnel it into research to aiding patients who have already succumb to addiction.  |
| Purdue Pharma  | Act 1: They continue to sell their products without interference. They are able to have doctors vouch for their product as they pay them off. Act 2: They are forced to label their products. Most likely their products will take a dip in purchase as people are put off from purchasing it, meaning their revenue falls. Act 3: Without doctor push, people are less likely than before to use OxyContin for pain relief meaning again their revenue would drop.  |
| Consumers/Patients  | Act 1: They would still be receiving products that are harmful to them and addictive. This would be good in the short term for pain but long term leads to a longer opioid crisis. Act 2: With labeled products, consumers are able to make an educated decision on whether or not they’d like to purchase this supposedly addictive product. Informed consumer is best! Act 3: Patients will no longer be persuaded by doctors to consume this product. Less people will fall victim to the facade and be able to avoid becoming addicted.  |
| Workers of Purdue Pharma  | Act 1: They will continue to work in the same way as the revenue of the company is not hurt so they can continue to fund workers. Act 2 and 3: These outcomes are roughly the same. With a decrease in revenue for the company, it is likely they will need to lay off workers to circumvent the loss.  |
| Opioid Addicts  | Act 1: They can continue to consume the opioids without warning or awareness from others. This will prolong the crisis. Act 2: With warning labels, people are more likely to become educated on their addiction and attempt to seek help. Act 3: Doctors will likely take more action to recognize those who abused opioids and give them alternatives and the aid they need to get over it rather than allow them to have it.  |
| Family of Opioid Addicts (alive or deceased)  | Act 1: No justice is served to their family member was a victim of the crisis. Act 2 and 3: Justice is brought for the family as they see other people are kept from falling victim to the crisis as a result of labeling and doctors no longer vouching for the drug.  |
| Doctors  | Act 1: They continue their practice of accepting pay from Purdue Pharma and push the harmful drug on people. Act 2: They are unaffected by this mostly as people on their own become aware of the harm of the drugs. Act 3: They no longer receive pay but are able to instruct people on the dangers of the drug. Removes guilt and allows them to put the life of the patient as the main priority.  |

The sixth step of the decision making model is to seek guidance. In doing so, we are able to assess our solutions and possibly create more for our case. In this case, we have a company choosing to hide the addictive nature of a product from their consumers through heavy marketing. I would first inquire researchers of the active drug, oxycodone. I would like to see them publicly explain, to myself as well, how harmful this makes OxyContin to consume on a regular day to day basis. They can confirm public destress over the product and show how Purdue Pharma has had a large hand in the opioid crisis plaguing states all over the country, namely Oklahoma. I would also ask doctors who have treated opioid addicts and ask them how effective labeling of products is in preventing abuse further was. I would like to see how much of an impact treatment can make for victims as well as how labels caution people from using the drugs. This will allow me to confirm my decision in this case and decide whether or not Purdue Pharma should follow through.

The final step in the decision making model is to make a decision and then ultimately decide whether the accused have been ethical. In this case, I have found Purdue Pharma to be truly unethical in their choice to market the product OxyContin as a nonaddictive drug. Their immoral decision has lead to a large opioid crisis in the state of Oklahoma as well as plenty of others and has cost many their lives. I would like to see alternatives 2 and 3 brought to fruition where Purdue Pharma can no longer pay off doctors to promote their product and they must label their products as containing highly addictive ingredients. With this choice of using both solutions, we should be able to prevent the continuation of the opioid crisis with and funnel more care into researching ways to help those already affected. The consumer has a right to be informed of the harm in what they are consuming and that is what this mix of solutions strives for. With this, Purdue Pharma will be doing what they should have done from the start which was ensuring the safety of any and all customers.

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