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Drug giants sued in St. Landry

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Opelousas attorney Patrick Morrow is suing two of the nation's largest drug companies for selling defective products and misrepresenting their value.

Representing state Attorney General Charles Foti, the state Department of Health and Hospitals and the citizens of the state, Morrow has filed a multimillion dollar civil lawsuit against **Eli Lilly** and Co. Inc., and Janssen Pharmaceutical.

Four lawsuits were filed in the 27th Judicial District Court on Saturday against the two drug giants alleging unfair business practices and violations of consumer protection laws. The lawsuits seek damages for increased medical costs due to side effects suffered and for increased Medicaid expenses due to misleading sales pitches.

The suits were filed in connection with the production and marketing of the drugs **Zyprexa** and Risperdal, both of which are categorized in the lawsuit as "potent antipsychotic" drugs for the treatment of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder in adults.

According to the lawsuit, these drugs were sold to physicians in an "offlabel" manner by the sales persons of both companies. This means both the companies and their salespeople knew the drugs were not tested by the Federal Drug Administration for pediatric use, yet they mislead doctors into believing otherwise.

Zyprexa, a product of **Eli Lilly**, which is based in New Jersey, has been on the market since 1997, but the company did not notify doctors of the possible side effects and the FDA did not test its use for children, the suit charges. The same charges were filed against Janssen Pharmaceutical, another New Jersey company, for its product Risperdal, which went on the market in 1993.