



An 800-pound sculpture, titled "Purdue," created by artist Domenic Esposito is displayed outside the Connecticut headquarters of drugmaker Purdue Pharma, Friday, June 22, 2018, in Stamford, Conn. The sculpture was inspired to create by Esposito's brother's battle with addiction. Several state and local governments are suing Purdue Pharma for allegedly using deceptive marketing to boost sales of its opioid painkiller OxyContin, blamed for opioid overdose deaths.

SUSAN DUNNE, AP

Drug spoon sculpture placed outside drugmaker Purdue Pharma headquarters

The Associated Press

STAMFORD, Conn. — An 800-pound, nearly 11-foot-long steel sculpture of a bent and burned drug spoon was placed Friday in front of the Connecticut headquarters of drugmaker Purdue Pharma as part of an art protest against the opioid crisis.

Artist Domenic Esposito and art gallery owner Fernando Alvarez dropped the sculpture at the company's Stamford headquarters. Police arrested Alvarez on a minor charge of obstructing free passage. A city worker removed the spoon with a payloader and it was hauled to a police evidence holding area.

Several state and local governments are suing Purdue Pharma for allegedly using deceptive marketing to boost sales of its opioid painkiller OxyContin, deceiving patients and doctors about the risks of opioids. The company has been blamed for helping fuel addiction and opioid overdose deaths.

Purdue Pharma denies the allegations in the lawsuits.

“We share the protesters’ concern about the opioid crisis, and respect their right to peacefully express themselves,” the company said in a statement Friday in response to the sculpture. “Purdue is committed to working collaboratively with those affected by this public health crisis on meaningful solutions to help stem the tide of opioid-related overdose deaths.”

Opioid overdose deaths rose to about 46,000 in the U.S. for the 12-month period that ended in October 2017, up about 15 percent from October 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Esposito, of Westwood, Massachusetts, and his family have struggled with his brother’s 14-year opioid addiction. He said his brother, Danny, who has been clean for the past four months, has nearly died and has been in and out of jail.



Artist Domenic Esposito, in yellow vest, and Stamford art gallery owner Fernando Luis Alvarez, at right, oversee the installation of an artwork, an 800-pound, 10 ...
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He said the idea for the 4-foot-high sculpture, which includes a depiction of burned heroin on the spoon, came from his mother screaming several years ago that she found another bent spoon used by his brother. Spoons are used to “cook” the drugs into liquid form before putting them into syringes.

“The spoon has always been an albatross for my family,” Esposito said. “It’s kind of an emotional symbol, a dark symbol for me.

“This is just a movement for accountability,” he said. “Percocet and OxyContin are still all over the streets. Nothing’s changed. People are still dying. ... It’s also a calling for the federal government to step in and do something.”

The placement of the giant spoon at Purdue Pharma kicked off an exhibit on the opioid crisis that opened Friday at Alvarez’s gallery in Stamford.