

# COMMENTARY

Monday, February 10, 2003

## Editorial FDA holds answers to Pfizer's problem

It is a rare instance in which the people of one nation get to see the judiciary of another in action up close. That happened here on the University campus Friday, as the Navajo Supreme Court heard arguments in the case of Nelson v. Pfizer, a lawsuit stemming from the failure of Pfizer's Rezulin anti-diabetes drug in some patients.

The suit came about after 16 Navajo tribe members came forward, claiming liver damage and other injuries resulted from the use of Rezulin.

We do not buy the argument of Pfizer that it is somehow immune to the Navajo Court's jurisdiction. Pfizer said it had "no relationship" with the Navajo, but this is absurd. The company was selling its product on Navajo land. According to the plaintiffs, there were direct marketing attempts on Navajo reservations to sell the medication.

This lawsuit is no different than if a German or Kenyan or Japanese citizen were to sue Pfizer. This argument almost smacks to us of a "We're an American company, we don't recognize this court" argument. Wrong.

There is a bigger issue at play here, however. While we sympathize with the need to quickly bring out medicines that can save lives, there has to be a process in which these medicines are tested so they pose the least risk to human life possible, rather than being rubber-stamped out to suit the drug companies.

According to an article published last year in the Journal of the American Medical Association, a full 20 percent of prescription medicines may pose an unacceptable risk to patients. Many of these medicines don't receive a thorough-enough testing regimen, and the Food and Drug Administration sometimes relies on the companies' own data, which can be biased in favor of approval.

Of the 1.9 million who have taken Rezulin, there have been 66 certified instances of liver failure resulting in death. Some researchers say the number of all instances of damage could reach as high as 2,000.

Similarly, drugs such as Baycol and phen-fen, touted as medicinal panaceas, have seriously jeopardized patients' bodies after approval, their risks swept under the rug.

This is intolerable. Perhaps more lawsuits, such as the Navajo case against Pfizer, will force drug companies into some sort of responsibility. But we doubt it. It is time that the FDA take action, test drugs thoroughly and force drug manufacturers, under pain of permanent rejection of a drug, to present every shred of test data on a drug up for approval.

## Flexing Maxim-um muscle

When Maxim readers got its February issue in the mail, most were expecting the softcore fare that has become the modern "gentlemen" magazine's hallmark. The cover was titillating enough: "Bikini Blitz!" Pages of mostly topless women modeled bathing suits for readers' masturbating pleasure.

The preoccupation with the female body is what Maxim knows best. And any magazine that has the, er, balls to publish articles about "tornado" oral sex and the lot should be commended. With the clinical sex education children get in elementary school, grown adults need magazines such as Maxim and Cosmopolitan to give them more insight as to needs in the sack.

But a much more ugly picture overshadowed the normal combination of sex-ed articles and underdressed models in the February edition. In a three-page spread, Maxim used video game-like illustrations to portray how hand-to-hand combat can be good exercise.



Julie  
 Lauderbaugh  
 Judge Julie

In "Maxim's Kick-Ass Workout," an illustration of a white man, wearing a wife-beater shirt emblazoned with "Muscle," was shown kicking and tossing about a bludgeoned and extremely emaciated likeness of Mahatma Gandhi.

Among other violent exercises, Maxim advocated strangling to "strengthen your man-titties and your ego." In one panel, Gandhi is depicted lying on the floor with the "muscle" man standing over him. The text reads, "... quickly ask Gandhi if he can see the change in your physique. No response? Keep working out."

Another gem was this: "A way to exercise the leg muscles is to focus on his head and use it as your personal trampoline. Mauling the guy's face is a full butt and thigh workout." Gandhi is shown lying on the floor with blood spurting out of his head while the other



HOW ABOUT YOU PUT THOSE MUSCLES TO SOME GOOD USE. LIKE FREEING A SUB-CONTINENT OR SOMETHING.

P. UTSEY

Peter Utsey Emerald

character stomps on his skull.

Understandably, the South Asian community didn't take this caricature lightly. IndiaCause, a U.S.-based activist group created the most noise and even swayed Maxim's editor-in-chief, Keith Blanchard, to issue a formal apology last week.

"We apologize if our cartoon ... was interpreted as offensive," Blanchard said. "An edgy sense of humor, laced with irony, has always been a central element of Maxim's editorial."

To its credit, Maxim's sophomoric sense of humor extends to everyone, not just Gandhi. In the same article, readers were encouraged to "drop a rock on a fat, Speedo-Sportin' Euro." And the magazine also has a regular feature with a Japanese character

named "Hiroki" who speaks in broken English: "Picture look good. Shell too crunchy — metal hurt my teeth!"

Maxim's content isn't as offensive as it is just plain stupid. But in an age of politically correct Nazism, Maxim's attempts to push the envelope are almost refreshing. Italian Americans have complained about their depiction on "The Sopranos"; Mexican Americans are upset about "Kingpin"; and hey, I'm being underrepresented on BET!

But with continued violence against Middle Eastern-"looking" men after Sept. 11, 2001, Maxim is doing a disservice to all Americans with its all-too-literal Gandhi-bashing article — especially for the laughably ego-centric purpose of tight abs and buns of steel. Now young, horny, hetero-

sexual readers are not just being taught how to find the G-spot, but they're also being told violence against peace-loving religious icons will make them manlier.

If the magazine was as "edgy" as Blanchard says it is, why did it choose Gandhi for the story? Why not pick high profile pacifists such as Martin Luther King Jr. or Jesus Christ to play the "pussy"?

Until Jesus gets body-slammed by the Pope in the next issue, readers should chalk up the incident to immature ignorance on behalf of the editors and move on. Meanwhile, Maxim should go back to featuring what it does best: naked women and cunnilingus lessons.

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### CORRECTIONS

In the article about the Unity Celebration ("Bringing history forward," ODE, Jan. 28), two quotes were attributed to the opposite speakers. Alex Gonzales should have been credited for the quote beginning, "People have to sit down and just talk," and Khanh Le should have been credited with quoting from Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail." In the Nov. 21 article

about the Campus Day of Solidarity ("Adding their voices," ODE), student Bill Hamann was not speaking on behalf of the Oregon National Guard. He should have been identified as representing Students for Peace, and his quote should have read that he refuses "to shed innocent blood. Not for politics, not for oil, not for anything."

The Emerald regrets the errors.

### Online poll

Each week, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit [www.dailyemerald.com](http://www.dailyemerald.com) to vote.

**Last week:** Are University of Oregon scholarships distributed fairly?

**Results:** 90 total votes  
 Yes, individuals that work the hardest get rewarded — 12.2 percent, or 11 votes

Yes, the University has a right to distribute money as it sees fit — 28.9 percent, or 26 votes

No, too much money is going to athletics over academics — 37.8

percent, or 34 votes  
 No, too much reward for accomplishments over financial needs — 5.6 percent, or 5 votes  
 Don't know — 8.9 percent, or 8 votes  
 Leave me alone! — 6.7 percent, or 6 votes

**This week:** What's the best way to get laid on Valentine's Day?

**Choices:** Bring your date home for a movie; Hang out in the lobby after "The Vagina Monologues"; Show off your new dreadlocks at a peace rally; Romantic dinner, gifts and candy; Backrubs! (They work every time); Leave me alone!