

# Lesson Plan: Analysis of corporate tactics in the opioid crisis

(standalone or building towards later assignments)

**Description:** This lesson plan was developed for a 1-hour lab/discussion session for students to develop skills in analyzing original documents held by the Opioid Industry Documents Archive (OIDA) that illustrate the wide range of corporate tactics deployed in increasing opioid sales and to link them to news coverage about the role of specific corporate actors. This lesson follows the introductory lecture and operates as a jigsaw activity to map out the broader landscape of corporate tactics to develop a deeper understanding of the role of corporations in the opioid crisis.

The activity was developed as a foundation for subsequent lab sessions where students develop health policy assignments and pilot tested in the Johns Hopkins University undergraduate public health program. The follow-up assignments can include a variety of policy-related exercises (an elevator pitch, policy brief, or testimony, etc.) that can be developed to mitigate harms and safeguard against these tactics and address the opioid crisis. Potential follow-up assignments can also be used to develop a broader understanding of the commercial determinants of health across industries.

## Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lab/discussion section learners will be able to:

1. Identify specific corporate tactics deployed by the most prominent corporations in the opioid crisis to enhance sales to the detriment of the health of the public
2. Describe how these corporate tactics deployed by multiple corporations collectively played a pivotal role in igniting and perpetuating the opioid crisis

**Procedure:** Students will have already participated in the lecture presentation. In this activity students are divided into small groups of 4-5 to constitute 5 groups (group size and numbers can be adjusted based on class size) and provided with the pre-reading materials ahead of the lab session. During the lab session the instructor will introduce the activity, the sequence of events, and the time they will spend in each part of the session (approximately 5 minutes). The instructor will note that these documents and news stories are about prominent corporations that all played an important role in the opioid crisis. In the first part students will spend 15 minutes in their small groups discussing corporate tactics to increase opioid sales illustrated by their assigned document and reflected by their news article about a specific corporation(s). They will summarize these tactics and select a representative from each group to present their findings to the larger group. In the next part of the activity representatives from each small group will present the key lessons from their group in about 2-3 minutes (total of 15 minutes). In the third part of the session the instructor will facilitate a large-group discussion about lessons drawn from these tactics drawn from the smaller groups (15 minutes) and wrap up with a conclusion and potential link for any subsequent activities that may be building on this activity (5 minutes).

## Pre-reading for student groups:

*Teaching note:* The New York Times and Washington Post pieces are quite extensive, so in case there are more than 5 groups, these could each be assigned to two groups.

### Instructions for students:

Please read your assigned news story and relevant OIDA documents prior to the discussion sec. Spend about 15 minutes discussing the corporate tactics illustrated by the documents and how they played a role in the broader strategy of the specific corporation(s) to aggressively increase opioid sales. Reflect and discuss: What do you notice about the documents that are selected for your group? (Audience, tone, specific tactics). What ethical concerns do they raise? How do they participate in the broader activities of the corporation in the opioid crisis that you were assigned based on your news article? You will select a representative from your group who will present your findings for the larger group.

### Group 1: Insys

**News story:**

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2022/12/08/fentanyl-drugmaker-insys-documents/10841172002/?qnt-cfr=1>

**OIDA documents:**

- <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/opioids/docs/#id=fhvd0233>
  - Sales tactics
- <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/opioids/docs/#id=hlmc0233>
  - Insys speaker's agreement

### Group 2: Walgreens, CVS, Walmart

**News story:**

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/10/14/walgreens-cvs-walmart-opioid-epidemic-documents/>

**OIDA documents:**

- <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/opioids/docs/#id=mzyh0257>
  - Walgreens discusses their "good faith dispensing" policy re: the opioid crisis
- <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/opioids/docs/#id=hxlh0257>
  - Walmart instructions for pharmacists re: suspicious orders

### Group 3: Mallinckrodt

**News story:**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2022/mallinckrodt-documents-doctors-sales/>

**OIDA documents:**

- <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/opioids/docs/#id=mhlg0241>
  - Email referenced in the article
- <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/opioids/docs/#id=zhm0241>
  - Small example of sales team discussing strategies

### Group 4: McKinsey

**News story:**

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220630072302/https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/29/business/mckinsey-opioid-crisis-opana.html>

**OIDA documents:**

- <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/opioids/docs/#id=gmy0256>

## Group 5: McKinsey/Purdue/links to other nonprofits

### News story:

[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/amit-paley-mckinsey-purdue-opioids\\_n\\_62d19d55e4b0ed8ba48ef1f3](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/amit-paley-mckinsey-purdue-opioids_n_62d19d55e4b0ed8ba48ef1f3)

### OIDA documents:

- Slide deck: <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/opioids/docs/#id=hqpw0232>
  - Focus on the beginning of the document to page 13 of the PDF. This shows how Purdue was being pitched on switching to addiction drug treatment medications.