

# Vioxx widow awarded \$250 million by Texas jury

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A jury in Angleton, Texas, awarded the widow of Robert Ernst more than \$250 million U.S. in damages related to the medical drug Vioxx on Friday.

The jury found the giant pharmaceutical firm Merck and Co. liable for the death of a man who took the once-popular painkiller.

Jurors awarded Robert Ernst's widow, Carol, \$253.4 million US in damages, which is a combination of his lost pay as a Wal-Mart produce manager, mental anguish, loss of companionship and punitive damages.

The jury -- from a semi-rural county south of Houston -- deliberated for 10 1/2 hours over two days before blaming the drug for killing Ernst in his sleep in 2001.

Jurors rejected Merck's argument that Ernst died of clogged arteries rather than a Vioxx-induced heart attack that led to his fatal arrhythmia.

The case drew attention from pharmaceutical companies, lawyers, consumers, and stock market watchers as Merck faces more than 4,200 Vioxx-related lawsuits pending across the country.

Merck said it plans to appeal.

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