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Suit filed against Abbott for epilepsy drug racketeering

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Abbott accused of racketeering in epilepsy drug marketing suit



Singapore: An epilepsy drug marketing suit has been filed against Abbott Laboratories, US, in the US District Court of Illinois, Chicago, alleging that the firm engaged in racketeering when it led an effort to market the epilepsy drug Depakote for unapproved uses.

The plaintiffs are the Sidney Hillman Health Center of Rochester, New York; the Teamsters Health Services and Insurance Plan Local 404 in Springfield, Massachusetts, and Park Ridge, Illinois-based United Food and Commercial Workers Unions and Employers Midwest Health Benefits Fund, each of which allegedly paid for its beneficiaries' use of Depakote. Alleging violations of federal racketeering and of being unjustly enriched, the plaintiffs are seeking unspecified money damages.

The pharmaceutical company last year agreed to pay $1.6 billion to settle state and federal claims it promoted the drug's use to treat bi-polar mania and to prevent migraine headaches. In addition to its agreement to pay $800 million to resolve civil claims and a $700 million criminal penalty, Abbott said it would pay $100 million to states to resolve consumer protection matters.

Chicago federal court Judge Virginia Kendall in June denied a defense request to dismiss a 2011 lawsuit accusing company directors including chairman Mr Miles D White of shirking their responsibility to supervise marketing of the drug.