

Injury due to high heels

Are there grounds for a class action lawsuit for damage to health?

- **“Arrest” MANOLO and confiscate all "manolos".** Some may think that MANOLO doesn't deserve this mention or the hard-hitting headline. Others, at least, may think differently. One can only hope, however, that the latter group will increase its following once they have finished reading the *statement of facts* and *charge sheet* against MANOLO. Having reached this point, there may be a few more who have understood the full extent of the problem.

- **A universal Spaniard.** It is true that MANOLO is an exemplary human being within the existing social parameters. Moreover, his profile is that of a winner. Tireless worker. Great talent and imagination. The recipient of universal praise, showered with awards. A true cosmopolitan, dividing his time between London, Milan and New York. Among many others, stars such as MADONNA and KATE MOSS or on television, CARRIE BRADSHAW, have made him a celebrity. And, the fact is, MANOLO has legions of admirers. Among his earliest are BIANCA JAGGER, MARISA BERENSON and ANGELICA HUSTON...

"On Monday, in London, several powerful women from the fashion world including the journalist SUZY MENKES, editors ANNA WINTOUR, GRACE CODDINGTON and FRANCESCA SOZZANI, models such as NAOMI CAMPELL and even KATE MOSS herself, expressed gratitude for those oh so sophisticated, but as GRACE CODDINGTON added, *always human, gestures*" (*El País*, 29.11.12, p. 48).

Given the praise of such "important" people and "after receiving recognition for his career in London in the British Fashion Awards" the Spanish Government itself had no choice but to *get into gear*. It could not be left behind. It would be exposed to international ridicule. And so it was, that MANOLO "yesterday received the national prize for fashion design, awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Culture and worth 30,000 euros" (*El País*, o.c.) in recognition for his work spanning four decades. Long live culture! In this modern and progressive Spain.

- **MANOLO's "Misdemeanours".** "Offences", "crimes" as ADOLF would say (*Ornament und Verbrechen, 1908, ADOLF LOOS*). Such a well-reputed citizen, such a glittering career, you must be asking yourselves, can we really blame MANOLO?

It must be said upfront. MANOLO is accused of *gender-based violence*. Yes, absolutely. But MANOLO is clearly extremely refined, working with the utmost dedication down to the last detail. No loose ends. He always plans and projects everything with extreme meticulousness. He is tenacious. And he does it in plain sight.

As always, year after year, for the coming season, he is already getting busy designing new instruments with which to continue punishing his victims, even though such punishment takes place in a glamorous, sickly sweet and agreeable environment. He has the magic aura of a high priest, and through his 'ambassadors' this translates into deeds and lifestyles that pervade and pollute popular culture. A world based on appearances, where differences are bought to the fore, promoting further distances and barriers.

Waging war against MANOLO's "misdemeanours" and those of other fellow travellers active in similar worlds, is an uphill battle. He is not alone. Some of his well-known victims say in public that they are happy with what Manolo makes for them, the "manolos". MADONNA herself has said that "manolos shoes are as good as sex" and they "last longer". And SARAH JESSICA PARKER, the star of the TV series, begged a mugger "... you can take my ring and my watch, but please don't take my manolos!" Who will not recall this phrase from the series *Sex and the City*? Long before MARILYN MONROE, referring to pioneers in the art that MANOLO now cultivates so successfully, publicly declared that "I don't know who invented high heels, but all women owe him a lot."

To-date no one has denounced this "abuser". And since, as we have said, he has legions of fans, there are also those who support him and sing his praises to the media. MANOLO sleeps peacefully. He is well protected. It is impossible to take him down.

What those who profess to adore him ignore is that such momentary pleasures come at a steep price. A pair of "manolos"... "a woman's dream". There can be no doubt that MANOLO provides his victims with both luxury and height. Obviously not everyone can aspire to a pair of "manolos". However, every cloud has a silver lining. There are the rip-offs, the fakes... far cheaper, and which in any case are on the same level.

● **A public menace inciting depravity...** MANOLO does not usually make his victims bleed. He is very subtle. He works indirectly, slowly and insidiously. As if what he has to offer were a magic potion, sweet, tasty, exciting and sensual... when in fact it acts exactly like a poison "drip by drip", passing unnoticed for a long time.

But... Watch out! We are now hearing that the trends set by this "guru" and his "cronies" are inducing his followers to commit voluntary mutilation, although this is disguised as an "aesthetic intervention" to "win over" a pair of "manolos" or something of that ilk. Faced with such perversions, we must definitely stop MANOLO and those of his brotherhood. A woman who was once graceful is today unrecognisable as she shuffles along, complaining frequently. "Oh those 'manolos', oh those 'manolos', they have destroyed my life! "

"Women are literally chopping off their pinky toes to fit into high heels... US new fashion. Another technique used by women to be able to wear high heels is having collagen injected into the balls of their feet...According to data from the *American Podiatric Medical Association* 87% of women have had foot problems from wearing uncomfortable or ill-fitting high heels" (*La Vanguardia*, Fashion, 03/12/2012).

● **Could MANOLO be sued in the State of New York?** MANOLO seems to be one of the good guys. But he is oblivious. He never seems to have thought through the consequences of his frenetic, creative activity. Someone should tell him... From now onwards, at the very least, it would not be excessive to demand that MANOLO's *productions* be marked with a label warning of their dangers and the risk they pose. If *tobacco is bad for your health* surely and without a doubt "manolos" are too. Quite apart from their proportions. If only as a matter of courtesy and delicacy, such a trifling detail could not be overlooked in such an elegant milieu.

However, this will not suffice. Somehow he must compensate his victims for the damage he has inflicted on them to-date, even when his conduct was not intentional. Lawyers, by reason of their trade, are highly ingenious. Especially in the United States, where they have presented some really curious legal claims, inconceivable for minds on the wane and other such dinosaurs. And, importantly, there are cases which actually thrive. It is surprising therefore, that, for example, in New York, where Manolo has a broad operational deployment, he has so far managed to "dodge the bullet". To-date, as in other places, he continues to act with total impunity.

Beyond the borders of Iberia, there is still a widely extended environment in which the *power of the male* continues to promote the *sacrifice of female* to be implemented as an object of desire, to satisfy the animal instincts of the former. *They must be beautiful...* they must constantly strive to improve their *look*... Perhaps the "social function" of the buttocks is still an enigma. *As for men*, there is nothing they have to do. They don't have to take the pill the day before or even the day after. Nothing at all. Some women are okay with the status quo and very happy, and will not speak out even when confronted with such shameless behaviour. We must not delude ourselves. The magazines where "celebrities" and famous people make an appearance... are a good example. Oh! ... The audacity of a "creator", is overloaded with epithets like "rebel" 'exclusive' "revolutionary"... "icon of freedom"... "out of this world" "divine"... and other crap allowing more than one dissolute and cracked playboy to ply his trade... Together with his entourage.

● **The Association of Female Victims of "Manolos"** Bearing in mind so much nonsense perhaps the world needs a new movement: that of the Association of Female Victims of "Manolos" in order to warn, protect, and defend the unwary from these *pathogenic agents disguised as consumer goods*.

Of course, certain sensibilities will meet a frosty reception in a country such as our own. It seems that the authorities exercise no control whatsoever over the thousands of products flooding the market. Prevention is short-sighted. The apathy of people in a position of power allows some "Stars" to do exactly what they want. Even more so in a country where we pimp out justice, like a call girl, to service only the few.

NOTE

This article was published in Spanish on 13 December 2012 under the title *Detengan a MANOLO y Confisquen "los manolos"* (www.peritajemedicoforense.com). It is written in an ironic and humorous tone with the intention of drawing attention to a public health issue that it considers important. The title refers to a certain world-famous designer footwear brand (although what is said could also be applicable to others) with a special link to celebrities. The shoes sold are known as "manolos". Among others, the brand has a boutique in New York. Interesting to note that precisely the actress SARAH JESSICA PARKER, according to some media outlets in 2013, had suffered irreparable damage to her feet due to wearing high heels.

In the United States any matters linked to strict liability are a source of great concern. In Spain, however, such legal issues progress only very slowly.

The book *El diseño como cuestión de Salud Pública [Design as a public health issue]* (... *Diseño del producto, Diseño ergonómico. [Product design, ergonomic design]*. Ediciones Díaz de Santos, Madrid, May, 2010), dealt with the health impacts of different objects and products which, together with their use, could also be classified as *Pathogenic agents disguised as consumer goods*. These products, over time, cause damage and injury to their users, although they act slowly and insidiously; *a drip drip effect*. The manufacturers of these products do not warn consumers of their danger and the potential injury they could cause, when they could easily do so with a simple *Consumer information label*.

High heels, have, to a greater or lesser extent, various pathological effects on the musculoskeletal system, in particular in the lower limbs. Such as: muscular imbalance, sesamoiditis, hallux valgus, hammer or claw toes, MORTON's neuroma, chronic ankle instability, injury to the Achilles Talon, and osteoarthritis of the knee. Sometimes also varicose veins. Neither should we overlook the affects the above disorders may have on the *spinal column* be it by causing injury or accelerating pre-existing damage.

It is convenient to emphasized the following aspects (seven “accusations”):

1. Medical practice confirms that wearing high heels causes, to a greater or lesser extent, health damage, general injuries and pathological effects on the musculoskeletal system, particularly in the lower limbs.
2. According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, 87% of women have foot problems from wearing ill-fitting and uncomfortable high heels. Such footwear can be included into the pathogenic agents disguised as consumer goods.
3. Its potential damage is generally ignored by the user.
4. These harmful effects are not due to improper use but, however, to the simple wearing under normal conditions.
5. These products cause damage and injury to their users over time, although they act slowly and insidiously: *a drip drip effect*.
6. Manufacturers don't warn consumers about the danger and potential injury of wearing high heels, when they could easily do so by a simple *consumer information label*.
7. Cunning advertising encourages high heels demand in general. The survival of many industries demands the attention of teen girls, sometimes tricked by media power. It is worth to wonder in what extent, in a specific social context, an embryonic psychological addiction element is generated. In any case, the aforementioned perverse effects are reflected in news like: amputating the pinky toe to wear high heels. (“Women are literally chopping off their pinky toes to fit into high heels...”).

Appendix -

It is interesting the work of MERCOLA, *High Heels, High Risk* (June 26, 2015)

- Close to half of US women wear high heels, and those who wear them own an average of nine pairs each. The shoes tend to make a regular appearance even though 71 percent of women surveyed by the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) said the shoes hurt their feet (1)
- From 2002 to 2012, more than 123,000 injuries from wearing high heels were treated in US emergency rooms. The amount of such injuries doubled from 2002 to 2012, according to the new research published in the *Journal of Foot and Ankle Surgery* (2)
- In the majority of cases, the injuries were minor, and one in five resulted in a broken bone. The study's lead author, Gerald McGwin, an epidemiology professor in the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Public Health, noted (3)

"Although high-heeled shoes might be stylish, from a health standpoint, it would be worthwhile for those interested in wearing high-heeled shoes to understand the risks and the potential harm that precarious activities in high-heeled shoes can cause."

- Researchers found high heels increase bone-on-bone forces in the knee joint significantly, which they said "may explain the observed higher incidence of osteoarthritis in the knee joint in women as compared with men." (4)
- A 2015 study published in the *Journal of Orthopedic Research* also found changes to knee kinematics and kinetics during high-heel walking that may contribute to increased osteoarthritis risk in women. The risk increased with extra weight and as the heel height increased (5)
- Because of the extra stress placed on your knees, wearing high heels increased the risk of joint degeneration and knee osteoarthritis in yet another study as well (6)
- Other research suggested the use of high-heeled shoes may "alter the natural position of the foot-ankle complex, and thereby produce a chain reaction of (mostly negative) effects that travels up the lower limb at least as far as the spine." (7)

- Additionally, according to research from the University of Southern California, wearing 3.75-inch heels may increase stress on your knee joints by up to 90 percent compared to wearing a half-inch heel! (8)

- Generally, the higher the heel the more stress it places on your knee joints, however even shoes with moderately high heels (1.5 inch) "significantly increase knee torques" that may contribute to the development and progression of knee osteoarthritis (9)

- Indeed, yet another study revealed wearing high heels may lead to "abnormal spine loading patterns and increases the risk for developing musculoskeletal injuries." (10)

And when worn long-term (defined as at least 40 hours a week for a minimum of two years), high heels lead to "substantial increases in muscle fascicle strains and muscle activation during the stance phase compared with barefoot walking."

- The results suggest that long-term high heel use may "compromise muscle efficiency in walking," which explains why many high-heel wearers complain of discomfort and muscle fatigue. (11)

- Aside from altering your gait, wearing high heels may contribute to bunions (hallux valgus). As written in the journal *Deutsches Arzteblatt International* (12)

"In women it is not only narrow shoes that cause hallux valgus but also higher heels. These result in more weight placed on the forefoot, with overstretching of the toes and resultant splayfoot development, which in turn triggers metatarsus primus varus deformity."

- According to the American Osteopathic Association, not only are high heels one of the major factors leading to foot problems in women, but up to one-third of wearers suffer from permanent problems due to long-term use (13). Natalie A. Nevins, DO, an osteopathic physician from Hollywood, Calif. who specializes in neuromusculoskeletal medicine, explained (14).

"Extended wear of high heels and continually bending your toes into an unnatural position can cause a range of ailments, from ingrown toenails to irreversible damage to leg tendons.

Additionally, cramming your toes into a narrow toe box can cause nerve damage and bunions... High heels have also been linked to overworked or injured leg muscles, osteoarthritis of the knee, plantar fasciitis and low back pain."

The unnatural posture that's created from wearing high heels, which causes you to overarch your back leading to strain on your knees, hips and lower back, can cause even more issues. For instance, it can put pressure on nerves in your back, leading to sciatica, a painful condition that leads to pain and numbness that can travel down to your feet.

- Chronic pain is not uncommon with extended wear of high heels. Due to the position of your heel (pointed upward), your Achilles tendon can shorten and tighten. When you switch back to flats, it will stretch again, which can be painful. According to Dr. Nevins (15) *"This tendon is designed to be flexible, so the foot can lie flat or point. With repetitive wear, you can develop unhealthy patterns that can persist even when you're not wearing high heels."*

Sources and Referentes (MERCOLA, *High Heels, High Risk*)

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