

Rising Star: Butler Snow's Susanna Moldoveanu

By **Andrew Karpan**

Law360 (June 13, 2022, 2:02 PM EDT) -- Butler Snow LLP lawyer Susanna Moldoveanu filed thousands of summary judgment motions on behalf of Johnson & Johnson over claims of defective pelvic mesh devices in what became one of the largest multidistrict cases in history, earning her a spot among life sciences attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 Rising Stars.

HER BIGGEST CASE:

When Moldoveanu found herself involved in the tens of thousands of lawsuits that started hitting the courts almost a decade ago alleging companies like Johnson & Johnson used compromised studies to trick doctors into thinking their pelvic mesh products were safe, it wasn't just a big case for her — it was one of the largest mass tort cases in U.S. history.

Inside that legal machine, Moldoveanu was employed as a lead motions coordinator, where she spent three years filing thousands of motions for summary judgment, as well as responses and replies to those bids as the pharmaceutical giant sought to limit the number of people the company would be forced to pay for selling those allegedly defective mesh products.

"That's the big thing — it's efficiency," Moldoveanu said of how she approached handling so many cases. For her, fighting so many pelvic mesh cases quickly became thrilling.

"That's also what makes it exciting," she said. "You're dealing with so many different issues, all at the same time. I always tell associates that it's such great work to do if you want to get a lot of experience really quickly. It feels like you get to encounter nearly every issue that product liability law has to offer."

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Moldoveanu says that she really likes the kind of product liability work that a client like Johnson & Johnson hands out to a firm like

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Susanna Moldoveanu
Butler Snow

Age: 38

Home base: Memphis, Tennessee

Position: Attorney

Law school: University of Mississippi School of Law

First job after law school: Clerk for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

Butler Snow, where she's spent the past decade of her life.

"We really enjoy working with our wonderful clients," she says. "We really consider ourselves true partners."

For her, working on behalf of a far-reaching company like Johnson & Johnson is appealing.

"I'm proud to represent these companies that innovate and make products that improve people's lives," she says. She credits vaccines and other drugs they've begun marketing more recently with "changing the pandemic" and "putting us on a path to normal."

A related inspiration, she says, is her husband, a cancer researcher who runs a lab at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

"So, I've always had a lot of appreciation for the scientific process and what these companies are doing," she adds.

HER PROUDEST MOMENT:

Moldoveanu says that her first job out of law school was working as a clerk for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, and later appearing before the circuit court was a "dream."

"I would say that I felt really proud to actually become an appellate court practitioner," she said. "It's been a dream realized to get to be in these different appellate courts as a practicing attorney."

According to her firm, she's managed to successfully defend drug and medical device companies in appeals in the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Eleventh Circuit Courts of Appeals.

She says she likes to prepare for these appearances by spending hours rehearsing in moot courts.

"It's amazing how much time you spend getting ready for a 10-minute argument," she said. "Hours and hours."

ON WHAT'S NEXT:

While all the work from the Johnson & Johnson mesh cases has ended, Moldoveanu says she's already working on the next big thing: defending against lawsuits from U.S. Army veterans who claim they experienced hearing loss as a result of faulty 3M Co. earplugs. As in the Johnson & Johnson matters, she's coordinating motions for 3M, too.

"The subject matter isn't the same, but you're dealing with the same product liability laws and the same product liability issues," she says.

— *As told to Andrew Karpan*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2022 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2022, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.
