



World Health Organization Removes Opioid Guidelines after Report Claims Influence of Drug Industry

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has pulled its opioid prescription guidelines after a report showed that the drug industry may have influenced it. The UN health agency cited "new scientific evidence" before removing their opioid guidelines. US lawmakers alleged that the guidance was influenced by the pharmaceutical industry.

The WHO provides public health policy guidance for worldwide use. The organization said in a statement that discontinuing the guidelines was done "in light of new scientific evidence" saying that the move will also "address any issues of conflicts of interest of the experts that have been raised".

They also added: "WHO also recognizes that the need for access to pain relief must be balanced with concerns about the harm arising from the misuse of medications prescribed for the management of pain, including opioids."

In May, Reps. Katherine Clark (D., Mass.) and Hal Rogers (R., Ky.) released a report alleging that the United Nations health agency produced guidelines for painkiller use that were influenced by individuals and

organizations with financial ties to drug making companies. The report singled out Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin.

Purdue Pharma is facing thousands of lawsuits from multiple states across the US for their alleged role in spreading the opioid epidemic. The lawsuits claim that the company, owned by the Sackler family, used misleading marketing methods in order to downplay the addictive properties of their opioid products. Many of these lawsuits name specific members of the Sackler family. The company has denied the allegations.

Purdue Pharma refused to comment on the WHO's decision. They instead pointed to the statement it issued following the release of the report in May. Click the link to see Jacksonville's top rehab placement programs.

Purdue denies the claims that the company and its independent affiliated company MundiPharma successfully and surreptitiously influenced the outcome of the two WHO guidelines referenced in the report, the company said at the time.

Other drugmakers that are facing similar lawsuits are Teva Pharmaceutical and Johnson & Johnson.

The report raised concerns over WHO guidelines that mentioned the "availability and accessibility for controlled medicine" as well as the "pharmacological treatment for persisting pain in children with medical illnesses". These guidelines were first published in 2011 and 2012, respectively.

A statement from the WHO on their decision to discontinue the guidelines now appears in their place on the organization's website.

The lawmakers expressed concern over the organization not highlighting the addictive qualities associated with potent opioids. They allegedly repeated language used by drug makers when describing the opioid products. The lawmakers accused WHO of lending the opioid industry the organization's "voice and credibility".

From 1999 to 2017, there were 217,530 deaths caused by prescription opioid overdoses in the US. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 400,000 people died in all opioid-related deaths over that period. This does not include the deaths related to the highly potent opioid Fentanyl, which is known to be about 100 times more potent than morphine. Every day, over 130 Americans die because of the opioid epidemic.

Reps. Clark and Rogers released the report on the same day that they sent a letter to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the WHO, outlining their concerns and asking the organization to remove the guidelines.

?Given our domestic epidemic associated with the abuse and misuse of opioids, I am encouraged by the WHO?s actions to pull back dangerous prescribing guidelines that I fear could fan the flames of abuse on a global scale,? Rep. Rogers said in a statement.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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