



Walmart, CVS Among the Retailers Facing Lawsuits over Opioid Epidemic

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Walmart, CVS, Rite Aid, and Walgreens are among the retailers and chain drugstores named in a lawsuit regarding corporate complicity in the opioid epidemic. Plaintiffs are seeking billions of dollars in restitution.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court, consists of almost 2,000 individual cases brought by cities counties, and Native American tribes around the country. The US opioid epidemic has levied heavy death tolls and is now being considered the worst drug crisis in the country's history.

The lawsuit is expected to go to trial in October. This will also be the biggest civil trial in US history.

The case is the latest in a series of lawsuits being filed against corporations, particularly drug makers, for their alleged role in spreading the opioid epidemic. More than 130 people die per day from opioid-related overdoses.

In fact, in 2017, more than half of the reported 47,600 opioid overdose deaths were attributed to synthetic opioids, such as Fentanyl. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the opioid-related mortality

rate between 1999 and 2017 is at 218,000.

It was in 2017 that the US government declared a public health emergency due to the number of people misusing prescription opioids. Pharmaceutical companies like Purdue Pharma, Johnson & Johnson, and Teva Pharmaceuticals are facing litigation over the mass production of painkillers and the marketing strategies used to promote them.

However, this is the first legal action taken against retailers that distribute those pills. The suit seeks to hold the retailers accountable for not abiding by laws that mandate pharmacies alert the Drug Enforcement Administration of suspicious orders, and for creating a "public nuisance".

In a statement provided to Vox, Walgreens spokesperson Phil Caruso said, "Walgreens pharmacists are highly trained professionals committed to dispensing legitimate prescriptions that meet the needs of our patients. Walgreens has not distributed prescription controlled substances since 2014 and before that time only distributed to our chain of pharmacies. Walgreens has been an industry leader in combating this crisis in the communities where our pharmacists live and work."

Meanwhile, Walmart is accused of not training its employees or enacting policy to monitor suspicious orders before 2011, at a time when prescription opioid overdose deaths were on the rise. It was at that time that the opioid-related deaths began surpassing deaths that involved heroin and cocaine combined. Click the link to see Milford's top rehab placement programs.

Rite Aid and CVS submitted court filings, detailing that "no evidence" delivered by the case's plaintiffs linked their opioid distribution to misuse. Rite Aid's company spokesperson Chris Savarese said that the company does not comment on pending litigation.

In an email to Vox, CVS spokesperson Mike DeAngelis said that the company is "aggressively defending against" the lawsuit's allegations and that the retailer never distributed Schedule II controlled substances like oxycodone or fentanyl. "We maintain stringent policies, procedures, and tools to help ensure that our pharmacists properly exercise their professional responsibility to evaluate controlled substance prescriptions before filling them. Keep in mind that doctors have the primary responsibility to make sure the opioid prescriptions they write are for a legitimate purpose." According to The Washington Post, 76 billion opioid pain pills flooded the market between 2006 and 2012.

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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