



Johnson & Johnson to Pay \$572 Million for Fuelling Opioid in Oklahoma

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Oklahoma has successfully sued Johnson & Johnson for its role in the opioid crisis after a judge ruled in the state's favor. The decision makes Oklahoma the first state to successfully sue an opioid manufacturer—a significant step in the fight against what is being considered the worst drug crisis in US history. The ruling is expected to affect other drug companies hit by multiple lawsuits.

The damning 42-page decision made by Judge Thad Balkman ruled that the company bore a wide responsibility for helping to create the opioid epidemic in Oklahoma. The judge said not only did Johnson & Johnson aggressively push false claims about the safety and effectiveness of its own narcotic painkillers, but it also changed medical practice with "deceptive" claims intended to break down caution among doctors about prescribing opioids. This included using huge resources to fund organizations and research to promote narcotics.

Balkman then ordered the company to pay \$572 million in compensation initially with additional payments to be negotiated to cover treatment, overdose prevention, and other costs of abating the epidemic in the state in the coming years. Oklahoma had asked for \$17 billion in compensation.

Johnson & Johnson said it will appeal the decision. This verdict is a major blow to all opioid makers, distributors across the country who are facing similar lawsuits for their alleged roles in the opioid crisis.

The epidemic has claimed the lives of more than 400,000 people over the past two decades. Pharmaceutical companies have previously attempted to pin the blame on doctors who prescribed the opioids. Click the link to see Poughkeepsie's top rehab placement programs.

Oklahoma's attorney general, Mike Hunter, said the ruling confirmed that "Johnson & Johnson maliciously and diabolically created the opioid epidemic in our state".

"Today is a major victory for the state of Oklahoma, the nation and everyone who has lost a loved one because of an opioid overdose," he said. "Our evidence convincingly showed that this company did not just lie and mislead, they colluded with other companies en route to the deadliest man-made epidemic our nation has ever seen."

Purdue Pharma is facing similar lawsuits over its powerful opioid, OxyContin. Oklahoma's attorney general has also sued Purdue for allegedly kickstarting the opioid epidemic in the 1990s with the potent opioid product. Purdue Pharma settled out of court for \$270 million before the trial. However, the company is still facing hundreds of other lawsuits in different states.

Sabrina Strong, one of Johnson & Johnson's trial lawyers said that the ruling was flawed. The company argued that the drugs it sold were approved by federal regulators and that they could not be tied directly to any deaths in Oklahoma. "We have sympathy for all who suffer from substance abuse. But Johnson & Johnson did not cause the opioid abuse crisis here in Oklahoma or anywhere in this country," she said.

The judge, however, found that the opioid maker acted in concert with other companies to escalate prescriptions by pushing the false narrative that there was a desperate need for painkillers. Additionally, Johnson & Johnson pushed that "there was a low risk of abuse and a low danger of prescribing opioids".

Balkman wrote: "A key element in (Johnson & Johnson's) opioid marketing strategy to overcome barriers to liberal opioid prescribing was its promotion of the concept that chronic pain was under-treated (creating a problem) and increased opioid prescribing was the solution."

"Among other things, they sent sales representatives into Oklahoma doctors' offices to deliver misleading messages, they disseminated misleading pamphlets, coupons, and other printed materials for patients and doctors, and they misleadingly advertised their drugs over the internet".

The judge also said that Johnson & Johnson sought to influence medical practice with ?substantial payments of money to a variety of different pain advocacy groups and organizations that influenced prescribing physicians and other health care professionals?. Further, Balkman ruled that Johnson & Johnson ignored warnings from the Food and Drug Administration and its own advisory board over its marketing methods for its high strength Fentanyl drug, Duragesic.

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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