



Experts Say Payouts from Drug Companies are ?Highly Questionable? Despite US Opioid Crisis

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Addiction experts and activists are questioning the payouts from drug companies resulting from lawsuits over their alleged roles in the opioid crisis, saying it is ?highly questionable?. So far, two multimillion-dollar drug manufacturers will pay for their role in the opioid epidemic.

The current epidemic is now being considered the worst drug crisis in US history. However, efforts to get compensation for the opioid crisis have been met by a range of responses from optimism to criticism.

Earlier Purdue Pharma and its owner, the wealthy Sackler family, reportedly backed a proposal to resolve all opioid lawsuits against them for more than \$11 billion. Purdue Pharma is the maker of OxyContin, one of the opioids that triggered the crisis.

If agreed upon by attorneys general across the US, the potential settlement would be the largest to date in the complex litigation over addictive painkillers, which have caused the deaths of about 400,000 people since 1999. Purdue Pharma is facing thousands of lawsuits across the country for their alleged role in the drug crisis.

The proposal came a day after an Oklahoma judge ruled against Johnson & Johnson for a similar lawsuit. The ruling is significant being the first one of its kind, meaning it can influence future decisions on similar cases. The judge ruled that Johnson & Johnson created a "temporary" public nuisance by tricking doctors into overprescribing its opioid-based medications by downplaying side effects and potential health hazards.

Judge Thad Balkman then ordered the drug company to pay \$572 million to the state of Oklahoma as reimbursement for costs it incurred while dealing with the surge of addiction and overdoses. The state can negotiate with Johnson & Johnson when it comes to additional expenses along the line.

Following this decision, the company's shares rose more than 5.4 percent, reflecting investors relief that the payout was far less than the \$17.5 billion that the state sought. Click the link to see Jamestown's top rehab placement programs.

This decision received different reactions, however. Photographer Nan Goldin, whose Pain campaign has triggered widespread protests at Sackler-supported art institutions said that the Purdue settlement would be "highly questionable" because the Sacklers would still walk away as billionaires while experiencing no judicial judgment.

"The whole thing is orchestrated by the Sacklers and very well done, but underneath it's highly questionable. We want them to be held personally accountable, and that's not going to be possible with this settlement. They're not putting their own money and threatening to go bankrupt. I think it's blackmail," she said.

The proposal will have Purdue file for bankruptcy, hand itself over to a trust controlled by the states, cities, and counties in the lawsuits, and sell its overseas drug maker Mundipharma. However, the settlement only requires the Sackler family to pay over \$3 billion in cash. The deal also contains no provision for addiction treatment centers, anti-addiction drugs, etc.

"This is great PR for the Sacklers—almost like their philanthropy—but they are not taking responsibility and they are remaining outside the law," Goldin said. Meanwhile, the Johnson & Johnson court judgment can potentially be duplicated from state to state.

"This is a landmark decision," said Andrew Kolodny, a doctor and opioid researcher who was a key witness for Oklahoma in the case. "It would be nice if there was more money, but \$572m will go a long way in helping Oklahoma address the crisis."

Oklahoma authorities will be watching how the money from Johnson & Johnson will be divided. Kolodny

says the Oklahoma decision should still be celebrated ?as the first time a court has ruled that opioid manufacturers are responsible for an epidemic of addiction and overdose deaths?.

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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