



Opioids and the Courts News: Mar. 8-15, 2019

National

[Purdue Pharma CEO says bankruptcy is 'an option' as company faces opioid lawsuits](#)

Washington Post

Purdue Pharma's chief executive said the company is considering bankruptcy as it faces a cascade of lawsuits alleging that the drugmaker played a key role in driving the nation's opioid crisis, including aggressively and deceptively marketing the powerful painkiller OxyContin.

Purdue's president and chief executive, Craig Landau, said in an interview with The Washington Post that the company has not yet decided whether to file bankruptcy, but he said it is something the company is weighing as it considers the impact of potential legal settlements or jury verdicts that could cost tens of billions of dollars.

"It is an option," Landau said. "We are considering it, but we've really made no decisions on what course of [action] to pursue. A lot depends on what unfolds in the weeks and months ahead."

National

[Judge refuses pharmaceutical firms' request to delay opioid trial, set for May](#)

CNN

An Oklahoma judge ruled Friday that a historic opioid trial against several major pharmaceutical companies will begin May 28, rejecting their motion to delay the trial.

In issuing his decision, Cleveland County District Court Judge Thad Balkman said the matter is of huge public importance and should move forward in a timely fashion. The trial is set to be the first in the nation to go before a jury that could determine pharmaceutical companies' role in the nation's opioid epidemic and whether Big Pharma should pay for it. The judge has said cameras will be allowed in the courtroom -- a decision the drugmakers fought.

The suit was brought by Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter against some of the nation's leading makers of opioid pain medications, alleging that deceptive marketing over the past decade fueled the epidemic in the state. Hunter has said the defendants -- Purdue Pharma, Johnson & Johnson, Teva Pharmaceuticals, Allergan and others -- deceived the public into believing that opioids were safe for extended use.



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Indiana

[Marion Council approves Municipal Court employee to help those addicted to opioids](#)

Marion Star

There will soon be a liaison between Marion Municipal Court and the treatment community aimed at addressing offenders who are addicted to opioids.

Marion City Council voted 7-2 on Monday to approve a case manager position that will report directly to Tom Stotts, the chief probation officer at the court.

The main focus will be to monitor those convicted of misdemeanor offenses that are seeking medically assisted treatment, mostly through monthly Vivitrol injections.

It will be a part-time position that will be primarily funded by the Marion-Crawford Board of Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services.

Brad DeCamp, who is the director of the board, said \$30,000 will be allocated for the new position.

The funding comes from the state's 21st Century Cures act, which was passed in an effort to combat the opiate epidemic. Money from the state-wide initiative was first allocated to the local ADAMH board in 2017.

Maine

[A new midcoast drug court would also serve veterans but state funding remains the key](#)

Bangor Daily News

Under a new district attorney, the vision for an expanded [specialty] court to serve criminal defendants struggling with addiction in midcoast Maine is growing, but still reliant on the Legislature for funding.

The proposal for a court dedicated to offenders with substance use disorder in the midcoast has been [taking shape during the past year](#), after Maine's judicial branch identified the region as a possible location for [an expanded drug court](#) that would offer more resources to defendants than traditional drug courts.

Ohio

[Mahoning County Drug Court catches attention of Ohio governor](#)

WYTV

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine has made solving the opioid crisis the cornerstone of his new administration. Mahoning County's Drug Court has his attention and he was in Youngstown on Tuesday to learn more about it.





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Throughout DeWine's campaign, he promised to add more drug courts across Ohio. The \$7.5 million he plans to add to the state's drug court budget will be allocated throughout the years.

DeWine is pushing for 30 more drug courts in Ohio, adding to the existing 150.

"For many people, this kind of tough love is the only way they can get sober," he said.

Ohio

[Judge Capper selected to attend opioid workshop in Columbus](#)

Ironton Tribune

Lawrence County Municipal Judge Donald Capper has been nominated to attend an upcoming state workshop on opioids. Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, of the Ohio Supreme Court, nominated Capper to participate in the Workshop for Rural Judges and Rural Sheriffs on Opioids, which is a collaboration of the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Office of Rural Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Ohio

[Probate Judge James Walther appointed to opioid task force](#)

Chronicle Telegram

Judge James Walther recently was appointed to a national opioid initiative task force.

Walther, who presides as judge of the Lorain County Probate Court, was appointed as a representative to the American Bar Association Senior Lawyers Division Opioid Initiative Task Force. The appointment was made by Anne Meister, president of the National College of Probate Judges.

The Opioid Initiative Task Force was created with the goal of following up on the 2018 Opioid Summit and to "engage the Division and ABA in discussions to counter the crisis," according to the American Bar Association.

The summit's participants helped create the resulting Opioid Summit Report, written by Dr. Mary Carter of Towson University. The summit's planners used the Opioid Summit's report and recommendations to collaborate with other ABA entities to develop a policy resolution addressing the opioid crisis.

Walther was chosen to represent the National College of Probate Judges because of his "interest in helping those with addictions," Meister said.





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Tennessee

[General Sessions Conference Tackles Opioids, Vicarious Trauma, License Suspension](#)

Tennessee State Courts

One of the most serious challenges arises from the ongoing opioid-driven addiction crisis, which was the subject of a session led by Jill Carney, a regional overdose prevention specialist with the Memphis Area Prevention Coalition. As Carney pointed out, a record 1,776 people died of drug overdoses in Tennessee in 2017. Of those overdose deaths, 1,268 were opioid-related, a grim sign of the increasing availability of dangerous drugs like heroin and fentanyl.

Thankfully, a powerful drug, Naloxone, better known by its brand name of Narcan, exists to counteract opioid overdoses. Narcan works by binding to opioid receptors in the brain, effectively blocking opioids from doing the same. Once Narcan begins working, which takes one to three minutes, the effects of the overdose are reversed. Carney trains people, including law enforcement officials and addicts, to administer the drug, which can be purchased at a retail pharmacy. She gave the judges explicit directions on administering the medication.

Carney said there have been two cases in Judge Tim Dwyer's Shelby County Drug Court where Narcan was used to stop an overdose. She advised the judges to be on the lookout for common signs of opioid overdose, including blue lips and fingernails, pinpoint pupils, and the "heroin nod," where users' heads may bob up and down as they gradually slip into unconsciousness.

Carney's devotion to her job is partly born out of personal experience. Carney, a former nurse, is a recovering addict herself; an alcoholic who progressed to prescription opioid abuse and, briefly, heroin.