



Opioids and the Courts News: Apr. 19, 2019

National

[Expert witness in opioids MDL: Fixing crisis will cost \\$483 billion](#)

Reuters

Thanks to Purdue Pharma and other defendants in the multidistrict litigation that alleges the drug companies sparked the opioid crisis, we now know how much plaintiffs claim they owe to fix it: more than \$480 billion.

That is the predicted cost, according to Johns Hopkins public health professor Caleb Alexander, of a national abatement plan that would stretch over 10 years. Alexander was cited in summaries of nonpublic reports by plaintiffs' expert witnesses that Purdue, Endo and Mallinckrodt filed last week as part of an emergency motion for more time to depose the witnesses.

The Johns Hopkins prof, according to the April 8 defense filing, estimated that the cost of providing treatment, preventative education, foster care, criminal justice resources, and other services to address opioid addiction would be \$452.9 billion.

An additional emergency filing on Wednesday night, in which defendants asked U.S. District Judge Dan Polster of Cleveland to strike supplemental expert witness material filed after the deadline for their reports, revealed that Alexander has added \$30 billion to his previous estimate. That puts the total cost of dealing with the crisis, according to defendants' disclosures about plaintiffs' marquee expert witness, at \$480 billion.

National

[Doctors Accused of Trading Opioid Prescriptions for Sex and Cash](#)

New York Times

Officials called the indictments, which were [unsealed in federal court in Cincinnati](#) on Wednesday, the "single largest prescription opioid law enforcement operation in history."

The indictments accuse 60 people, including 31 doctors, seven pharmacists and eight nurses, of involvement in the schemes, which included prescribing opioids for gratuitous medical procedures like unnecessary tooth pulling. In some cases, prosecutors said, doctors simply handed out signed blank prescription forms.

National

[Opioid epidemic may have cost U.S. governments \\$37.8 billion in tax revenue](#)

Penn State University

The opioid epidemic may have cost U.S. state and federal governments up to \$37.8 billion in lost tax revenue due to opioid-related employment loss, according to Penn State researchers.



Opioids and the Courts News: Apr. 19, 2019

Additionally, the researchers found that Pennsylvania was one of the states with the most lost revenue, with approximately \$638.2 million lost to income and sales tax. The study looked at data between 2000 and 2016.

Joel Segel, assistant professor of Health Policy and Administration, said that the results — recently published in the journal *Medical Care* — could help governments that are hoping to make up for lost revenue.

“This is a cost that was maybe not thought about as explicitly before, and a cost that governments could potentially try to recoup,” Segel said. “Instead of focusing on the cost of treating people with opioid use disorder, you could think about it in terms of a potential benefit to getting people healthy, back on their feet, and back in the workforce.”

Kentucky

[Kentucky chief justice talks about reforms, challenges](#)

Bowling Green Daily News

Another issue [Kentucky Chief Justice John D. Minton Jr.] said requires collaboration is the opioid epidemic, which President Donald Trump deemed a public health emergency in 2017.

Minton noted that last year in Kentucky there were more than 8,000 heroin-related charges and more than 1,000 opioid-related overdose deaths, adding that Kentucky is one of the top five states in the nation for per capita opioid deaths.

“While the opioid epidemic has placed a severe strain on the courts, we’re fortunate that the courts are in a unique position maybe to positively impact (the epidemic) ... this requires conversation between all three branches,” he said.

Last week, the Kentucky Court of Justice launched a new project called RESTORE that will use federal grant money to provide its employees with the training they need to properly handle opioid-related cases.

“The more our judges and our court officials know about the signs of addiction and the importance of medication-assisted treatment and how to address these, the better off we’ll be,” Minton said.

Minnesota

[Limmer frustrated with budget bill](#)

Minnesota Lawyer

Jeff Shorba, the state court administrator, was one of 18 testifiers to appear at the April 9 hearing. All asked the committee to reconsider the budget.



Opioids and the Courts News: Apr. 19, 2019

Shorba said the bill fails to fund two proposed judgeships for the 7th Judicial District, and offers no money to maintain five existing treatment courts. Both initiatives are needed, Shorba said, if the courts are to help stem the state's opioid and methamphetamine crises. Shorba said there has been a 36 percent spike in felony and gross misdemeanors drug cases filed over the last five years.

“Given the complexity and time-consuming nature of these serious crimes,” he said, “this spike has increased the number of judges our courts need to efficiently and effectively manage our rise in case load.”

Tennessee

[Suit: US drug agency deemed firm ‘kingpin’ in ‘drug cartel’](#)

Associated Press

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration viewed one drug-producing company as the “kingpin within a drug cartel,” according to a Tennessee lawsuit over the opioid epidemic.

A nearly 250-page amended complaint filed Monday in Circuit Court for Cumberland County said the DEA labeled Mallinckrodt a “kingpin” because it shipped opioids in high volumes to pharmacies it knew were feeding “pill mills” in Florida, which supplied Tennessee’s illegal drug market.

A spokesman for St. Louis-based Mallinckrodt called it a “gross and inflammatory mischaracterization of the facts designed to create headlines.”

The new claims come as drug companies field a flurry of lawsuits nationwide over the scourge of opioid abuse.

The Tennessee complaint was filed on behalf of five district attorneys general and a child born addicted to opioids.