



Opioids and the Courts News: Feb. 8, 2019

National

[Combating the opioid crisis one doctor at a time](#)

Washington Post

The opioid crisis and a series of high-profile lawsuits against drugmakers, including [Purdue Pharma](#) and [Insys](#), have put a national spotlight on aggressive pharmaceutical marketing campaigns to persuade doctors to prescribe their drugs, sometimes with scant attention to safety issues — a \$20 billion-a-year effort for all drugs sold in the United States, according to a [recent study](#). It has also given new energy to a countermovement that borrows the style, if not the substance, of that outreach.

Late last year, Aetna invested nearly \$7 million in the counterprogramming strategy, partnering with a nonprofit, [Alosa Health](#), to bring its pain treatment education to doctors in Pennsylvania, Maine, Illinois, Ohio and West Virginia — states hit hard by opioid overdose deaths. The health system Kaiser Permanente and the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) also use the approach.

National

[Judge Pushes Back Date Again for Trial Over Opioids](#)

Associated Press

A federal judge in Cleveland has again pushed back the date for a trial in some local governments' claims against the drug industry over destruction wrought by prescription opioid painkillers.

U.S. District Judge Dan Polster said in a recent order that the trial for claims made by the cities of Cleveland and Akron and Cuyahoga and Summit counties will begin Oct. 21. Cleveland.com reports it was previously set to begin in March and then in September.

Polster also pushed back other deadlines to complete expert reports and motions before trial. Attorneys for the governments and the drug companies requested the delay.

The accusations include claims that drug companies knew about problems surrounding opioid addiction but took no meaningful steps to help.

Pennsylvania

[Crowded field seeks 3 seats on Bucks County bench](#)

Bucks County Courier Times

Attorney and Bucks County native Toadvine vowed to “hold drug pushers accountable” if elected judge.



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“Opioids are killing more people than car wrecks,” he said in a statement. “Families devastated by this scourge want to know that the court system recognizes addiction is a disease.”

Wisconsin

[Walworth County treatment courts face uncertain future after DA questions role](#)

Gazettextra

The future of Walworth County’s treatment courts is uncertain after District Attorney Zeke Wiedenfeld at a special meeting Tuesday questioned his office’s participation in the programs and its level of control over who enters them.

Wiedenfeld told other members of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee that his concerns are a matter of public safety. But his statements led other members of the committee to speak out in favor of the programs.

And while there were procedural challenges and debates about who gets into treatment courts, the human impact hangs over all of it.

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On the topic of public safety, Clerk of Courts Kristina Secord said all but one relevant case from 2017 that did not go to drug court ended with probation. How would that be safer than treatment court?

Wiedenfeld said sentencing decisions are not always up to him. But in plea deals, he said, they consider when people go through intensive treatment on their own. For some, that’s better than drug court, he said.

But Reddy said length of time in treatment has a direct effect on outcome. A 30-day treatment program does not compare to the average for drug court, which is 86 weeks.

This is especially true for opiates and opioids, said Carlo Nevicosi, of the county’s Department of Health & Human Services.

“And [one] of the founding things of treatment courts,” Behl, the coordinator and chair of the committee said, “is that it holds individuals in participation in treatment longer than they would outside on their own, even more than probation.”