



## Opioids and the Courts News: Mar. 1, 2019

### National

[US opioid epidemic: FDA demands studies of whether opioids do control chronic pain](#)

BMJ (British Medical Journal)

Two decades into an opioid epidemic that has killed more US people than the second world war, the US Food and Drug Administration has said that it will require drug companies to conduct research to prove a claim that has never been scientifically demonstrated—that opioids actually help to control pain when used for long periods.

“We are going to impose a mandate on existing products . . . to answer the question that people have been posing for years: whether you have declining efficacy, and whether that declining efficacy can lead to addiction,” said Scott Gottlieb, FDA commissioner, in an interview.

### National

[These states have been hit the hardest by America's opioid epidemic](#)

CNN

While there's early evidence that the explosive rate of opioid deaths has [started to slow](#), opioids killed more than 49,000 people in the United States in 2017, according to preliminary data. A new study reveals which part of the country has been affected the most by the ongoing epidemic.

In a study of opioid deaths from 1999 to 2016, "we found that, in general, opioid mortality is skyrocketing," said [Mathew Kiang](#), a postdoctoral research fellow at Stanford University's [Center for Population Health Sciences](#).

More specifically, the study, [published Friday in the journal JAMA Network Open](#), found that the mortality rate from synthetic opioids in 28 states more than doubled every two years from 1999 to 2016. The District of Columbia saw the greatest increase in its opioid mortality rate, which more than tripled every year since 2013.

### National

[Building bridges for action: Ending the HIV and opioid epidemic](#)

The Hill

The United States is facing an urgent crisis of problematic drug use, of which the opioid crisis is but one component. In October 2018, the president signed the [SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act](#) that provides states and community-based organizations with additional tools to improve prevention, treatment and recovery initiatives.



## Opioids and the Courts News: Mar. 1, 2019

The SUPPORT Act authorized \$40 million per year to the CDC over a 5-year period to enhance state and local government surveillance capacity of opioid-use-related infectious diseases. This program also seeks to increase testing and linkage to care for HIV, Hepatitis C and other infectious diseases as part of substance use treatment. This is an important first step, but it remains insufficient as Congress must still act to appropriate these funds.

Better results will be realized if these HIV and opioid initiatives are coordinated and work together. [The most recent data](#) indicate that injection drug use was responsible for only 9 percent of new HIV diagnoses in 2017 (including 3 percent of diagnoses among men who have sex with men who also inject drugs). This is well below previous levels when [roughly 1 in 4 diagnoses were attributed to injection drug use](#). This decline is due, in part, to the effectiveness and deployment of syringe services programs (SSPs) which offer people who use drugs access to sterile syringes and other services, including pathways to drug treatment.

### Maine

[Maine's Chief Justice: fund opioid treatment, not the courts](#)

Maine Beacon

In a move criminal justice experts say represents a clear shift away from punishing Mainers dealing with substance use disorders, Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court Leigh Saufley [advocated](#) for increased funding for health and mental health care to combat the opioid crisis in her State of the Judiciary address on Tuesday.

During the address, Saufley said the state needs to “expand options for diverting more people from a lifetime of incarceration,” and encouraged legislators crafting the budget to fund “community-based services,” rather than pump more money into the judicial branch, including mental health and drug courts.

“All of the funding necessary to respond to the addiction and mental health needs of the public should be focused on the wide range of necessary community-based services that are not within the Judicial Branch budget,” she said.

### New Hampshire

[To Help With Addiction, N.H. Drug Courts Offer Reoffenders A Second Chance](#)

New Hampshire Public Radio

Since July 2016, the state has funded [alternative justice systems known as drug court](#), with the goal of tackling the rate of addiction within New Hampshire's jails, which is estimated far above 50 percent.



## Opioids and the Courts News: Mar. 1, 2019

Judge Jacalyn Colburn says the Nashua Drug Court works with reoffenders like [Natacha] Davis, whom the traditional criminal justice system has failed.

“When they’re released, they’re released back to the same community, the same situation, their skillset is no greater than it was when they went in, and they’ll continue to do that which they know how to do,” she says.

In drug court, participants get intensive treatment and community supervision for around two years. Davis spends hours each day in mandatory group and individual therapy and doing community service. She has random curfew checks and urine tests multiple times a week and check-ins with the drug court team on Tuesdays.

