

York County sues drug companies, physicians for role in county's opioid epidemic

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YORK COUNTY, PA -- Officials in York County say the opioid epidemic has cost the county greatly. Now, the county wants the money it lost from the crisis back.

York County has brought a lawsuit against 21 pharmaceutical companies and four physicians - none of those doctors being from York County.

The county's seeking damage costs related to how the epidemic has hurt the community over the years. Officials say the opioid epidemic has stolen from York County, and those listed in the lawsuit played a role in the loss.

"Just this past month (November), we had 19 deaths. Just in the first 5 days of December, we've had 10," said York County Solicitor, Glenn Smith, Esq.

Smith says the number of opioid-related deaths for 2017 is much higher than years past, adding that the drugs hurt the surrounding community and cost York County millions of dollars.

"Whether it's the criminal justice, whether it's through the treatment system, whether it's Children and Youth, whether it's the coroner's office from handling the number of deaths," he said.

Reviving those who've overdosed with Naloxone also costs the county, according to Smith. Naloxone is the overdose-reversal drug used by law enforcement and emergency officials.

The county's seeking damage costs related to the epidemic, filing a 252-page lawsuit against those 21 pharmaceutical companies and four physicians. Smith says the county examined similar lawsuits brought against opioid manufacturers and distributors when filing this case, both within Pennsylvania and from outside the state.

"What this complaint is alleging is this was purely a matter of corporate greed," said Smith.

The county cites fraud, negligence, and unjust enrichment against all 25 defendants, saying the companies and doctors named in the suit benefited from prescription opioid use while the county suffered.

"They had a product and expanded it for what it was originally was created for, and in the process of doing so, they lied about its addictive nature and its harmful side effects," explained Smith.

The complaint states all the defendants distributed deceptive educational material to doctors, patients, and law enforcement officials, and those listed also created false statements about the efficacy of prescription opioids in treating long-term, chronic pain.

"I think what we really want ideally here is to have the amount of resources available to us to take care of this problem," stated Smith.

If the county wins, Smith says the money would be distributed to departments impacted by the epidemic and used to battle the opioid epidemic in future years.

He says the litigation is costing taxpayers nothing - the law firm, Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, is representing the county. If the county wins the case, the firm could then take a portion of whatever settlement comes out of the case.

Officials could not yet say how much the opioid epidemic has cost York County, saying the county is still calculating those numbers, although Smith says hundreds of millions could be at stake.

If you wish to read the 252-page complaint, [Opioid Complaint Part 1 of 3](#), [Opioid Complaint Part 2 of 3](#), [Opioid Complaint Part 3 of 3](#).

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