

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Opioid Epidemic and Drug Company Accountability

On the evening of January 1st PBS News Hour reflected upon the nations opioid crisis, taking into account the some 40,000 overdose deaths in America last year and drug companies role in the epidemic. It is anticipated that this year could see the culmination of a flood of lawsuits, all seeking accountability for the epidemic and trying to secure more money to treat its victims These lawsuits, which are largely brought by states and cities impacted by the crisis, allege that many of these companies could have done more and acted sooner to stop the addiction and deaths of so many Americans.

Barry Meier, author of "Pain Killer: An Empire of Deceit and the Origin of America's Opioid Epidemic" was interviewed to lend his opinions on the topic as his book was about Perdue Pharma, the company behind the billion-dollar opioid OxyContin. In a recent New York Times Editorial, Meier voiced his concern that these cities and states might settle these suits thereby shortchanging the public. Questions such as why the companies acted the way they did, what did they know, who are the decision makers and why did they decide to flood the country with millions of pain pills must be answered.

Meier maintains evidence points to a 120-page Department of Justice (DOJ) document about a case that was being brought against Purdue Pharma. The DOJ prosecutors felt that they had enough evidence to prosecute alleging three top executives knew almost immediately after OxyContin appeared in the market, which was 1996, that it was being diverted to the street, that it was a drug of abuse, and that they had gotten consistent reports that the prosecutors believe should have been the basis for a public warning. Meier maintains had the company made timely alerts a lot of the havoc that we see today wouldn't have occurred. More importantly, had this evidence been made public during a trial of these expensive, the practices of doctors may have changed, the position of public regulators regarding OxyContin and other drugs may have stiffened.

In the five years since the Justice Department decided to settle this case, more than 80,000 Americans died of overdoses involving prescription painkillers, including Oxycontin. Meier also argued that another settlement in 2001 against Purdue by the state of Florida had a similar effect of hiding relevant information that would have helped change the course of this epidemic. There are communities all over this country that are desperate for money to train new addiction specialists, to buy Narcan, and open more treatment beds. Settlement money now could possibly mean saving lives now. A state might want to settle, because they need this money to treat people today. Meier believes a lot of that money can

come from public coffers, seeing no reason why the people who created this crisis should to profit from selling drugs to cure it.

To read the full transcript of the PBS news hour discussion please visit

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/will-drug-companies-be-held-accountable-for-americas-opioid-epidemic>

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. It's Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.

