

Press Release
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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Opioid Manufacturer Settles Fraud Charges

Pharmaceutical companies are being held accountable for their role in the opioid epidemic. This year, dozens of states are suing opioid manufacturers and distributors over their roles in the crisis, with some — including the state attorneys general of New York and Massachusetts — showing a willingness to go after individuals, like members of the Sackler family who own Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin.

A recent article in the New York Times discusses Insys, the opioid drug manufacturer who, like Perdue Pharma, has been ordered to pay \$225 million dollars to settle fraud charges after being accused by Federal prosecutors of illegally marketing its highly powerful painkiller Fentanyl to Doctors and of defrauding government health care programs. A month ago, a Federal jury in Boston found the company's top executives, including the founder, guilty of conspiring to fuel sales of the drug by bribing doctors and misleading insurance companies. As part of the deal, a subsidiary of Insys will plead guilty to five counts of mail fraud and the company will pay a \$2 million fine and \$28 million in forfeiture, according to a statement from the United States attorney's office in Massachusetts. The company will also pay \$195 million to settle allegations that it violated the federal False Claims Act, which involves defrauding the federal government through drug sales to health care programs like Medicare.

Prosecutors said that from August 2012 to June 2015, Insys used phony "speaker programs" to spread the word about its newly approved product, Subsys, which is a form of fentanyl that is sprayed under the tongue. The powerful painkiller was approved only for use in patients with cancer who were already using round-the-clock opioids, but the company quickly began marketing the product to a broader range of patients and used manipulative marketing strategies to entice doctors to prescribe more of its product. The prosecutors cited one example of a physician assistant in New Hampshire who did not write any prescriptions for Subsys until after May 2013, when he joined the company's speaker program. After joining the speaker program, he wrote 672 Subsys prescriptions and was paid \$44,000 from Insys, which prosecutors said amounted to illegal kickbacks.

The prosecution of Insys and its executives provides the latest example of the federal government's recent crackdown on drug makers and others as it seeks to hold them accountable for the nation's opioid epidemic, which has led to more than 200,000 overdoses in the past two decades.

To read the article in the Times please visit <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/05/health/insys-opioid-fentanyl-settlement.html>.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is joining in the fight against this epidemic by 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.