

SYNTHÈSE

Painkillers and painful killers

A Republican conservative sued a pharmaceutical company over hurtful market practices, as shown in The Guardian by Chris McGreal (doc 2). This illustrates how badly the opioid crisis impacted the US. While the National Center for Health statistics published charts in 2023 plotting drug overdose related death (doc 1), Barry Meier shows in 2018 in the prologue of his book what consequences it had (doc 4) and an article from The Economist in 2024 explains why it is hard to fight against drugs. This begs the question of how this concerning issue affected the US. There are explanations on how it started, but the problem has to be faced and so solutions are being discussed. 110 words

Barry Meier wrote that Purdue Pharma, a pharmaceutical company, released a new drug called OxyContin around 1995 which was a narcotic painkiller. It benefited from an aggressive marketing campaign falsely claiming that it was perfectly safe when in reality it was potentially addictive, which made it more profitable for the company. As shown by McGreal, Johnson & Johnson, another pharmaceutical company, later joined Purdue Pharma in their effort to influence the medical world to use more opioids while competing with them on this market, producing over 75 billion pills. This huge increase of opioid drugs distributed throughout the country caused an increasing number of people being addicted which rose the rate of drug overdose death as shown on the first NCH graph. 122 words

According to McGreal, this lobbying campaign was vastly profitable for the companies as Purdue was selling 1 billion dollars worth of OxyContin a year by 2000, the opioid market represented 8 billion dollars a year in 2019 and this number roughly doubled in 2022 if the sales are following the overdose curve. However this comes with a huge death toll for consumers as over 100,000 Americans died from overdoses in 2023 as stated in The Economist. As Meier wrote, it reached a point where morgues could not keep up with the death rate. Babies were already contaminated by narcotics consumed by their mother and policemen had to carry an antidote spray if they encounter someone having an overdose. According to NCH this tragedy did not hit everyone equally as native Americans were over 10 times more affected than Asian people. 139 words

Actions are taken to face this problem. McGreal states that Mike Hunter, Oklahoma's attorney general, sued J&J in 2019 for causing the opioid epidemic. According to The Economist, American authorities delivered a powerful blow on the

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sinaloa gang, but opioid traffic adapted and facing it calls for more radical methods, such as invading Mexico according to Senior Republicans. 57 words

To conclude, the greed of health companies caused the death of hundreds of thousands.

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