

## **Pharma Companies:**

- Attorneys generals of 41 states are investigating the makers and distributors of powerful opioid painkillers
  - Issued subpoenas seeking info from opioid manufacturers:
    - Endo International, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Teva Pharmaceuticals and Allergan, and Purdue Pharma
    - Demanding documents from distribution companies:
      - AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson
  - The "subpoenas and letters are to seek to uncover whether or not there was deception involved, if manufacturers misled doctors and patients about the efficacy and addictive power of these drugs"
- Millions of opioid users became addicted to opioids, or heroin, after being Rxed the medication by doctors
- Many doctors are saying they were assured by the drugmakers that the opioids were less addictive or even not addictive
- After federal regulators placed new limits on the drugs
  - Reduced the amount of opioids Rxed by 18% in 2015, from the peak in 2010

## **Some Stats:**

- Good News:
  - Annual Rxing rate by doctors dropped 13%
    - From 81 Rx per 100 people to 71 Rx per 100 people
  - Doctors are also Rxing high doses of opioids less often
    - Fell 41%
    - 11.4 per 100 people to 6.7 per 100 people
  - Overall amount of opioids Rx in the US dropped 18%
    - From a peak of 782 MMEs (morphine milligram equivalents) per capita in 2010 to 640 MMEs per capita in 2015
- Bad News:
  - Length of Rx increased from an avg. of 13 days in 2006 to 18 days in 2015
    - Concerning bc the longer the access to the drugs, the greater the chances of becoming addicted
  - US doctors are still Rxing 3x as many opioids as they were in 1999
    - 3x more than their European counterparts
- The counties where opioids are Rx the most are scattered around the country but tend to be places that have high numbers of white, unemployed people with lower levels of education
  - 6x more opioids being Rx in the highest Rxing counties compared to the lowest Rxing counties

## **The Sackler Family:**

- I lost all my notes so here's the very compressed version because it's 12:40 am and I don't want to write it all again:

- There were 3 Sackler brothers: Arthur, Mortimer, and Raymond
  - Arthur was the mad genius behind the whole Purdue company and basically figured out how to market the drugs his company created and how to push them into the drug market and get doctors Rxing them to patients
    - BTWs, he made BANK from it
  - He marketed many drugs by faking the information on the ads
- So, Arthur died and the fam went bat-shit crazy over all the monies and the company but Mortimer and Raymond ended up with it in the end
  - They did some crazy shit too
  - They created MS Contin ("Contin" for continuous)
  - MS Contin is a morphine pill with a patented "controlled release" formula: the drug dissolved gradually into the bloodstream over several hours
    - Became the biggest seller in Purdue's history
    - But of course, that wasn't enough
- Raymond's son, Richard, came into the picture next
  - Wanted to develop a drug with oxycodone
    - Oxycodone is inexpensive to produce and was already used in other drugs:
      - Percodan (blended with aspirin) and Percocet (blended with Tylenol)
  - They developed a pill of pure oxycodone, with a time-release formula similar to that of MS Contin
    - Decided to produce doses as low as 10 mg, but also jumbo pills:
      - 80 mg and 160 mg
      - Potency far exceeded that of any Rx opioid on the market
  - Obviously, they needed to market the hell out of this new drug because people were unsure of it because of the "abuse potential" of opioids
  - But, Richard wasn't having that and basically someone in the FDA, not the guy who ran it, but someone else approved it and then quit the job with the FDA and started working for Purdue
  - This new drug is called OxyContin
    - Purdue exploited a misconception to many doctors that oxycodone was *less* potent than morphine
  - Purdue paid several thousand clinicians to attend medical conferences and deliver presentations on the merits of OxyContin
    - Internal Purdue records indicate that doctors who attended the seminars in 1996 wrote OxyContin Rx more than 2x as often as those who didn't
  - Purdue basically marketed the shit out of OxyContin and used fake data to basically get almost everyone on board with Rxing and using OxyContin and that it was safe (even though it sure as hell wasn't, but Purdue was all about the MONAAY)
- So, there were a lot of family issues, honestly, I didn't read that part because I didn't feel like it, but that's the gist of what I got.
  - Everyone wanted Arthur's shit but no one could figure out who he had given it to in his will or something like that
  - But then, they found he gave 1/3 interest in Purdue to Mortimer and Raymond

- Also, according to one of Arthur's grandsons, no one in Arthur's descendant's line got any benefit from the sale of OxyContin, but he failed to mention Librium, Valium, or MS Contin, which Arthur totally marketed and made bank off of
- After OxyContin's release to the public, there were signs of people abusing it in rural areas, like Maine and Appalachia
  - If you ground the pills up and snorted them, or dissolved them in liquid and injected them, you could override the time-release mechanism and deliver a huge narcotic payload all at once
- Doctors kept Rxing OxyContin
  - Patients would start selling them on the black market
    - \$1 per milligram
  - Doctors were easily manipulated by patients or corrupted by the money in play
    - They set up so-called pill mills, pain clinics that thrived on a wholesale business of issuing OxyContin Rx
- Purdue did not pull the drug from the shelves or acknowledge that it was addictive
  - Instead, they only insisted that the only problem was that recreational drug users were not taking OxyContin as directed
    - Basically, they blamed everything on the people, not their drug or their company cause they still wanted to make money
- Arthur wrote that "all health problems devolve upon the individual"
  - So, it was Purdue's position that OxyContin overdoses were a matter of individual responsibility, rather than the drug's addictive properties
- No matter what anyone threw at them to point the blame at Purdue, they just shifted the blame to the drug abusers
- Also, when Purdue received FDA approval, they knew people weren't receiving a full 24 hours of relief
  - They KNEW that people would need another dosage before 24 hours was up
    - Those meanies
- **Symptoms of withdrawal:**
  - **Itching, nausea, the shakes**
- Summary of the next like 5 paragraphs is that people are abusing OxyContin and are trying to blame Purdue, but Purdue is still saying it's not them
- Purdue wanted to keep making bank and has thus been sued a thousand times over OxyContin since its release
- And then finally Purdue was brought to trial, but they settled for \$24 million before it could happen
- Richard Sackler stepped down as Purdue's president in 2003 but stayed as co-chairman of the company's board
- So, I was right, the Sackler family had a lot of drama but they stayed united in their silence on the subject of OxyContin (probably because they knew that if anyone spoke, it's bye-bye fortune)
- In August 2010, Purdue quietly replaced OxyContin with a drug that was subtly different
  - If you crushed these new pills, they were not a fine dissolvable powder, but an unwieldy gummy substance

- FDA approved it but had approved a label that included a claim about the drug's "abuse-deterrent" properties (a first of its kind)
- By the time Purdue reformulated OxyContin, the country was in the middle of a full-blown epidemic (basically caused by them)
- **Purdue's new market of younger people, who can less readily secure Rx for pain, and for whom OxyContin may be too expensive, have increasingly turned to black-market substitutes, including heroin**
- Purdue Pharma now acknowledges that there is an opioid crisis, but maintains that it has taken every available step to address it, from sponsoring "prescription monitoring" programs in some states to underwriting drug-abuse education
- **In recent years, American clinicians have issued about a quarter of a billion opioid Rx annually**
- Since Purdue made it more difficult to grind OxyContin pills, Rx have reported plummeted by 40%
  - Suggests nearly half of the original drug's consumers may have been crushing it to get high
- Forbes estimates that the Sacklers continue to receive some \$700 million a year from the family companies (there's a lot)
- As OxyContin spread outside the US, the pattern of dysfunction repeated itself: to map the geographic distribution of the drug was also to map a rash of addiction, abuse, and death.
  - The Sackler family has only increased its efforts abroad
    - A Purdue-related company called Mundipharma, into Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East
- There's a lot more information than what is said here, but I didn't want to write a 50-page paper (this is close enough as it is.. sorry guys, there's a lot of really good info about the Sacklers and what happened between 1995 and now)
- There are some stories about people who have been addicted to OxyContin and heroin, they're really interesting to read and kind of sad, but that's given the subject

Sources:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots>

[https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/PDO\\_Checklist-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/PDO_Checklist-a.pdf)

[The Sackler Family](#)