Florida Attorney General Sues Walgreens, CVS for Role in Opioid Crisis

The pharmacy chains were added to an existing lawsuit against opioid distributors and manufacturers.

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Florida's attorney general is suing popular pharmacy chains Walgreens and CVS over their alleged role in the state's ongoing opioid crisis, accusing them of "unconscionable efforts to increase the demand and supply of opioids" to vulnerable people across the state, NPR reports. The suit names distributors AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal and McKesson as well.

Attorney General Pam Bondi announced late last week that her office had added the two companies to an existing lawsuit filed against opioid distributors and manufacturers in the spring of 2018. The case, which includes OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma, Percocet maker Endo Pharmaceuticals and generic opioid maker Teva Pharmaceuticals, is one of many accusing major health care players of contributing to the epidemic.

Walgreens and CVS are two of the largest opioid distributors in Florida. In a recent press release, Bondi's office alleges both companies "failed in their duties under Florida law to stop suspicious orders of opioids they received." The amended lawsuit also accuses specialty pharmacy Insys Therapeutics of giving kickbacks to doctors in exchange for writing prescriptions for its fentanyl spray, Subsys.

The lawsuit also claims that since 2006, Walgreens and CVS have shipped billions of opioid dosages into the state, with Walgreens alone ordering more than 10 times the average amount in 2011. Regarding CVS, the lawsuit alleges the company distributed more than 700 million dosages of opioids throughout the state between 2006 and 2014.

Meanwhile, thousands of Floridians are suffering as a result of addiction. In 2016, 2,798 people died of opioid-related overdoses across the state.

Across the country, rates of hepatitis C virus (HCV) are on the rise among injection drug users, and several states are under watch for potential HIV outbreaks as a result of the crisis.

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