SEPTA Seeks Federal Class Action Lawsuit Over Sovaldi Pricing

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The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) has filed a federal class action lawsuit against Gilead Sciences over the company's pricing of Sovaldi, which cures the hepatitis C virus (HCV), according to a press release from Chimicles & Tikellis LLP, the law firm representing SEPTA.

The lawsuit is seeking class action status on behalf of all people and organizations who have paid all or some of the current purchase price for Sovaldi, as well as those who were denied treatment by a provider or insurance company because of its high cost.

SEPTA's complaint primarily alleges that Gilead's pricing scheme for the new drug, if left unchecked, could have the potential to bankrupt sectors of the U.S. health care system. A 12-week regimen of Sovaldi in the United States costs around $84,000 per patient, or $1,000 per pill. Between 2.7 million and 5.2 million Americans are living with HCV.

The suit is further argues that Gilead's pricing decisions have effectively barred several government programs, as well as certain consumers—mostly the poor and minorities—from obtaining Sovaldi. It asserts that Gilead has violated provisions in both the Sherman Antitrust Act and the Affordable Care Act (a.k.a. the health care reform law, or ACA) while marketing the new drug.

Despite the pricing pushback this year, Gilead has earned $8.5 billion from Sovaldi since it came out in December 2013. The drug takes less time, has far fewer side effects and is significantly more effective than older HCV therapies.

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