

# US court overturns historic opioid ruling against drugmaker Johnson & Johnson

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The Oklahoma State Supreme Court on Tuesday overturned a historic decision to fine US pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson \$465 million for its role in the opioid crisis.

In 2019, a judge had ordered the company to pay the sum to finance programs to combat the opioid [crisis](#), which has caused more than 500,000 deaths in 20 years in the United States.

The judge ruled the company had created a "public nuisance" with its marketing of prescription pain pills, saying it had adopted "deceptive" [marketing practices](#) to promote opioids.

It was the first civil judgment linked to opiates against a [drug company](#) in the United States. The state initially claimed some \$17 billion dollars in costs, corresponding to 20 years of financing of these programs.

On appeal, the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled the judge should not have relied on the public nuisance law to condemn J&J's manufacturing, marketing and sales practices, and overturned his decision.

J&J, like other pharmaceutical giants such as Purdue, the manufacturer of OxyContin, and major US drug distributors, have been accused of over-promoting their pain-relieving drugs from 1996 onwards, causing a crisis in addiction and an explosion of overdoses.

Distributors AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson, as

well as J&J, agreed in late July to pay \$26 billion to settle thousands of disputes related to the opioid crisis.

J&J said in June it had stopped production and sale of prescription [opioid](#) medications in the United States.

Purdue, for its part, declared bankruptcy and agreed to pay \$4.5 billion to victims and institutions that had been affected, in exchange for a certain civil immunity for its owners, the Sackler family. That case is still ongoing.

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