

Drug Company Has List of MDs Who May Recklessly Prescribe Painkillers



Purdue Pharma, which makes the opioid painkiller OxyContin, has compiled a database of about 1,800 doctors it suspects may have recklessly prescribed the drug to people addicted to it, as well as to drug dealers, the *Los Angeles Times* reports.

The company has kept most of the list private.

The company has maintained the list over the last decade, according to the newspaper. It has only alerted law enforcement officials or medical authorities about a small percentage of doctors on the list. Many of the doctors in the database have continued to write prescriptions for the drug, the article notes.

The list was discussed for the first time in public at a drug dependency conference in San Diego in June.

Robin Abrams, a Purdue attorney, said the database was created so the company's sales representatives would steer clear of the doctors on the list. She argued policing doctors is not the company's responsibility. "We don't have the ability to take the prescription pad out of their hand," she told the newspaper.

The company has told law enforcement officials or medical regulators about 154, or 8 percent, of the doctors in the database, Abrams said. She noted the company would alert authorities in some situations, such as cases in which their sales representatives witness apparent drug deals in doctors' parking lots, or observe doctors who appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Mitchell Katz, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, says the company is obligated to report all the doctors in the database. "There is an ethical obligation," he said. "Any drug company that has information about physicians potentially engaged in illegal prescribing or prescribing that is endangering people's lives has a responsibility to report it."