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8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON AT TACOMA

9 CITY OF TACOMA,

10 Plaintiff,

No. 3:17-cv-5737

11 v.

COMPLAINT

12 PURDUE PHARMA, L.P.; PURDUE  
13 PHARMA, INC.; THE PURDUE FREDERICK  
14 COMPANY, INC.; ENDO HEALTH  
15 SOLUTIONS INC.; ENDO  
16 PHARMACEUTICALS, INC.; JANSSEN  
17 PHARMACEUTICALS, INC.; JOHNSON &  
18 JOHNSON; and JOHN AND JANE DOES 1  
THROUGH 100, INCLUSIVE,

Defendants.

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26  
COMPLAINT  
3:17-cv-5737 - i

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
II.	PARTIES .....	6
III.	JURISDICTION AND VENUE .....	9
IV.	FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS .....	9
A.	Opioids are causing unprecedented harm. ....	9
B.	Defendants made and continue to make false and misleading statements about opioids through various channels. ....	15
1.	Defendants falsely claimed that the risk of opioid addiction was low. ....	24
2.	Defendants falsely instructed doctors and patients that more opioids were the solution when patients presented symptoms of addiction. ....	33
3.	Defendants falsely claimed that risk-mitigation strategies, including tapering, could safely address any concerns about addiction. ....	37
4.	Defendants falsely claimed doctors and patients could increase opioid usage indefinitely without added risk and failed to disclose risks associated with higher dosages. ....	41
5.	Defendants' deceptive marketing of the purported abuse- deterrent properties of their opioids has created false impressions that reformulated opioids can curb addiction and abuse. ....	44
6.	Defendants falsely claimed that long-term opioid use improved patients' function and quality of life. ....	46
C.	The 2016 CDC Guidelines and other recent studies confirm that Defendants' statements about the risks and benefits of opioids are patently false. ....	48
D.	Defendants have made these false and misleading statements to people, including physicians, in Tacoma. ....	55
E.	Defendants have reaped unprecedented profits from the sale of opioids. ....	57

1	F.	Tacoma has been significantly harmed as a result of Defendants’	
2		conduct.....	58
3	1.	Defendants’ conduct has dramatically increased Tacoma’s	
4		health care costs. ....	58
5	2.	Defendants’ conduct has significantly increased the City’s	
6		workers’ compensation costs. ....	60
7	3.	Tacoma has spent significant sums of money providing	
8		human services to the community as a result of the	
9		epidemic Defendants have created.....	61
10	4.	Tacoma has incurred serious costs responding to opioid-	
11		related health emergencies. ....	63
12	5.	Defendants’ acts have caused the City to incur significant	
13		additional public safety related costs. ....	67
14	V.	CLAIMS FOR RELIEF .....	70
15		COUNT One — Violations of the Washington Consumer Protection Act,	
16		RCW 19.86, <i>et seq.</i> .....	70
17		COUNT Two — Public Nuisance .....	73
18		COUNT Three — NEGLIGENCE .....	75
19		COUNT Four — violations of the racketeer influenced and corrupt	
20		organizations act (“RICO”), 18 U.S.C. § 1961, <i>et seq.</i> .....	76
21	A.	Description of the Defendants’ Enterprise.....	77
22	B.	The Enterprise sought to fraudulently increase Defendants’ profits	
23		and revenues.....	79
24	C.	Predicate acts: mail and wire fraud. ....	84
25	D.	The City of Tacoma has been damaged by Defendants’ RICO	
26		violations.....	92
		PRAYER FOR RELIEF .....	93
		JURY TRIAL DEMAND .....	94

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United States is currently experiencing an epidemic and crisis unlike any it has seen before—the misuse, abuse, and over-prescription of opioids.

2. Since the mid-1990s, sales of opioids have increased almost ten-fold, revenues for the pharmaceutical companies that manufacture these drugs have skyrocketed, and opioids have become the most prescribed class of drugs in America. In 2016 alone, health care providers wrote more than 289 million prescriptions for opioid pain medication, enough for *every adult in the United States* to have more than one bottle of pills.<sup>1</sup>

3. As a result of the flood of opioids into this country, cities like Tacoma have had to deal with the crippling effects of widespread opioid addiction. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) recently estimated that the total economic burden of prescription opioid abuse costs the United States \$78.5 billion per year, which includes significantly increased costs for health care and addiction treatment, and dramatic increases in strains on human services and criminal justice systems, as well as substantial losses in work force productivity.<sup>2</sup>

4. The cost in human lives is even more staggering. Today, opioids are the leading cause of accidental deaths in the country, surpassing deaths caused by car accidents. And exposure to these dangerous drugs comes through purportedly legitimate prescriptions written by doctors and dentists, making this an epidemic like no other.

5. Defendants, drug manufacturers of opioids, represented to physicians and the public that opioids were safe and effectively treated pain, with a low risk for addiction. But for

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<sup>1</sup> *Prevalence of Opioid Misuse*, BupPractice, <https://www.buppractice.com/node/15576> (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> *CDC Foundation’s New Business Pulse Focuses on Opioid Overdose Epidemic*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Mar. 15, 2017), <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/a0315-business-pulse-opioids.html>.

1 many of those prescribed opioids, the consequences have been severe. Every day more than  
2 1,000 people are admitted to emergency rooms across the country because of opioid-related  
3 abuse. Naloxone, a costly medication used to block and reverse the effects of an opioid overdose,  
4 is now routinely carried by law enforcement and EMTs. And individuals addicted to opioids, but  
5 without a prescription or the resources to obtain them, have turned to heroin, sparking another  
6 crisis directly related to the widespread abuse of opioids.  
7

8         6.       The epidemic is not a coincidence. Instead, it is the direct result of a sophisticated  
9 and well-developed marketing scheme by Defendants to sell drugs that have little or no  
10 demonstrated efficacy for the pain they are purported to treat in the majority of persons who  
11 receive prescriptions for them. Despite minimal or arguably no scientific evidence indicating that  
12 opioids offer any long-term benefit in treating chronic pain, Defendants misleadingly advertised  
13 their opioids as a panacea and pushed hundreds of millions of pills into the marketplace for  
14 consumption, fueling a crisis of unprecedented levels.  
15

16         7.       In fact, to date, there have been no long-term studies that demonstrate that opioids  
17 are effective for treating long-term or chronic pain. Instead, reliable sources of information,  
18 including from the CDC last year, indicate that there is “[n]o evidence” to show “a long-term  
19 benefit of opioids in pain and function versus no opioids for chronic pain.”<sup>3</sup> By contrast,  
20 significant research has demonstrated the colossal dangers of opioids. The CDC, for example,  
21 concluded that “[e]xtensive evidence shows the possible harms of opioids (including opioid use  
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23  
24

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25 <sup>3</sup> Deborah Dowell, M.D., Tamara M. Haegerich, Ph.D., and Roger Chou, M.D., *CDC Guideline for Prescribing*  
26 *Opioids for Chronic Pain — United States, 2016*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Mar. 18, 2016),  
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/rr/rr6501e1.htm>.

1 disorder, overdose, and motor vehicle injury)” and that “[o]pioid pain medication use presents  
2 serious risks, including overdose and opioid use disorder.”<sup>4</sup>

3 8. This crisis arose because Defendants told physicians and the public, through a  
4 well-orchestrated marketing campaign, that the risk of addiction to prescription opioids was low  
5 when opioids were prescribed to treat chronic pain. In support of this claim, Defendants  
6 misrepresented research and manipulated data to make opioids appear safe. For instance,  
7 Defendants widely invoked a one-paragraph letter-to-the-editor published in the New England  
8 Journal of Medicine (“NEJM”) in 1980 that declared the incidence of addiction was “rare” for  
9 patients treated with opioids.<sup>5</sup>

10  
11 9. Defendants used this letter to promote opioids as safe treatment for chronic pain,  
12 even though the letter’s authors examined only the files of patients administered opioids to treat  
13 acute pain in a hospital under doctor supervision.<sup>6</sup> Despite knowing the very limited scope of the  
14 study, Defendants regularly utilized and cited this letter as proof of the low addiction risk in  
15 connection with taking opioids. Defendants’ egregious misrepresentations based on this letter  
16 included claims that *less than one percent* of opioid users become addicted.

17  
18 10. Defendants’ marketing campaign worked. Their reliance on this letter and other  
19 sources of information that were false and misleading (as described in more detail below)  
20 ultimately resulted in a well-documented and substantial increase in prescription rates of opioids.  
21 But on June 1, 2017, the NEJM published another letter calling attention to the way the one-  
22

23  
24  
25 <sup>4</sup> *Id.*

26 <sup>5</sup> Jane Porter and Herschel Jick, MD, *Addiction Rare in Patients Treated with Narcotics*, 302(2) N Engl J Med. 123  
(Jan. 10, 1980), <http://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJM198001103020221>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

1 paragraph 1980 letter had been irresponsibly cited and in some cases “grossly misrepresented.”

2 In particular, the authors of this letter explained:

3 [W]e found that a five-sentence letter published in the *Journal* in 1980 was heavily and  
4 uncritically cited as evidence that addiction was rare with long-term opioid therapy. We  
5 believe that this citation pattern contributed to the North American opioid crisis by  
6 helping to shape a narrative that allayed prescribers’ concerns about the risk of addiction  
associated with long-term opioid therapy . . .<sup>7</sup>

7 Unfortunately, by the time of this analysis and the CDC’s findings last year, the damage had  
8 already been done. Defendants successfully manipulated the 1980 letter as the “evidence”  
9 supporting their fundamental misrepresentation that the risk of opioid addiction was low when  
10 opioids were prescribed to treat pain.

11 11. References to this letter were just one small part of the tidal wave of false and  
12 misleading statements made by Defendants over the last 20 years, including statements that  
13 continue to this day, regarding the purported benefits and minimal risks of opioids.  
14

15 12. Defendants spent substantial sums of money promoting and marketing opioids to  
16 doctors, patients, and the public, including through direct marketing, front groups, key opinion  
17 leaders, medical journals, and unbranded advertising. Through their well-orchestrated campaign,  
18 Defendants were able to convey a message that touted the purported benefits of opioids to treat  
19 pain and downplayed the risks of addiction related to opioid use.  
20

21 13. Furthermore, Defendants consistently, deliberately, and recklessly made false and  
22 misleading statements—including to doctors and patients in Tacoma— regarding, *inter alia*, the  
23 low risk of addiction to opioids, the need to prescribe more opioids to treat pain, risk-mitigation  
24

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25 <sup>7</sup> Pamela T.M. Leung, B.Sc. Pharm., Erin M. Macdonald, M.Sc., Matthew B. Stanbrook, M.D., Ph.D., Irfan Al  
26 Dhalla, M.D., David N. Juurlink, M.D., Ph.D., *A 1980 Letter on the Risk of Opioid Addiction*, 376 N Engl J Med  
2194-95 (June 1, 2017), <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc1700150#t=article>.

1 strategies to safely prescribe opioids, the lack of risk associated with higher dosages of opioids,  
2 the benefits of abuse-deterrent technology to curb abuse, and that long-term opioid use improved  
3 patients' function and quality of life.

4           14. Defendants profited handsomely from this campaign, generating billions of  
5 dollars in sales. Annual prescription opioid sales have consistently approached more than \$10  
6 billion in recent years. Indeed, despite making up only 4.6% of the world's population,  
7 Americans consume 80% of the world's opioid supply, including 99% percent of the global  
8 hydrocodone supply.  
9

10           15. In short, Defendants made and continue to make false and misleading statements  
11 about the benefits and risks of opioids, and did so through a well-funded marketing and  
12 advertising scheme to doctors, patients, and the public—including to doctors and patients in the  
13 City of Tacoma—despite knowing that there was little to no evidence to support their claims. As  
14 a result of these false and misleading statements, Tacoma has suffered significant economic  
15 damages, including but not limited to increased health care costs it bears as a self-insured city,  
16 health services costs, costs related to responding to and dealing with opioid-related crimes and  
17 emergencies—most notably borne by the Tacoma Police and Fire Departments—and other  
18 significant public safety costs, as described in more detail below.  
19

20           16. Accordingly, the City of Tacoma brings this action to hold Defendants liable for  
21 their deliberate misrepresentation regarding the benefits and risks of using opioids to treat pain—  
22 conduct that (i) violates the Washington Consumer Protection Act, RCW 19.86 *et seq.*, (ii)  
23 constitutes a public nuisance under Washington law, (iii) constitutes negligence under  
24 Washington law, and (iv) violates the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act  
25 (“RICO”), 18 U.S.C. §1961, *et seq.*  
26



## II. PARTIES

### **Tacoma**

17. Plaintiff City of Tacoma (“City” or “Tacoma” or “Plaintiff”) is located in Pierce County, Washington. Tacoma is incorporated as a first-class city pursuant to RCW 35.22 *et seq.*, as it has a population of ten thousand or more inhabitants and has adopted a charter in accordance with Article XI, section 10 of the State of Washington’s constitution.

### **Purdue**

18. Defendant Purdue Pharma, L.P. is a limited partnership organized under the laws of Delaware. Defendant Purdue Pharma, Inc. is a New York corporation with its principal place of business in Stamford, Connecticut. Defendant The Purdue Frederick Company is a Delaware corporation with its principle place of business in Stamford, Connecticut. Collectively, these entities are referred to as “Purdue.”

19. Each Purdue entity acted in concert with one another and acted as agents and/or principals of one another in connection with the conduct described herein.

20. Purdue manufactures, promotes, sells, markets, and distributes opioids such as OxyContin, MS Contin, Dilaudid/Dilaudid HP, Butrans, Hysingla ER, and Targiniq ER in the United States, including in the City of Tacoma.

21. OxyContin, Butrans, and Hysingla ER are Schedule II and III opioids first approved in 1995, 2010, and 2014, respectively.

22. Purdue generates substantial sales revenue from its opioids. For example, OxyContin is Purdue’s best-selling opioid, and since 2009, Purdue has generated between \$2 and \$3 billion annually in sales of OxyContin, one of the primary prescription opioids available in the painkiller market.

1           **Endo**

2           23. Defendant Endo Pharmaceuticals, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Defendant  
3 Endo Health Solutions Inc. Both are Delaware corporations with their principal place of business  
4 in Malvern, Pennsylvania. Collectively, these entities are referred to as “Endo.”

5           24. Each Endo entity acted in concert with one another and acted as agents and/or  
6 principals of one another in connection with the conduct described herein.

7           25. Endo manufactures, promotes, sells, markets, and distributes opioids such as  
8 Percocet, Opana, and Opana ER in the United States, including in the City of Tacoma.

9           26. Opana and Opana ER are Schedule II opioids first approved in 2006.

10          27. Endo generates substantial sales from its opioids. For example, opioids accounted  
11 for more than \$400 million of Endo’s overall revenues of \$3 billion in 2012, and Opana ER  
12 generated more than \$1 billion in revenue for Endo in 2010 and 2013.

13          28. On June 8, 2017, the FDA sought removal of Opana ER. In its press release, the  
14 FDA indicated that “the agency is seeking removal based on its concern that the benefits of the  
15 drug may no longer outweigh its risks. This is the first time the agency has taken steps to remove  
16 a currently marketed opioid pain medication from sale due to the public health consequences of  
17 abuse.”<sup>8</sup> On July 6, 2017, Endo agreed to withdraw Opana ER from the market.<sup>9</sup>

18           **Janssen**

19          29. Defendant Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. is a Pennsylvania corporation with its  
20 principal place of business in Titusville, New Jersey, and is a wholly owned subsidiary of  
21

22  
23  
24  
25          <sup>8</sup> Press Release, U.S. Food & Drug Administration, *FDA requests removal of Opana ER for risks related to abuse*  
(June 8, 2017), <https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm562401.htm>.

26          <sup>9</sup> *Endo pulls opioid as U.S. seeks to tackle abuse epidemic*, Reuters (July 6, 2017),  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-endo-intl-opana-idUSKBN19R2II>.

1 Defendant Johnson & Johnson, a New Jersey corporation with its principal place of business in  
2 New Brunswick, New Jersey. Collectively, these entities are referred to as “Janssen.”

3 30. Both entities above acted in concert with one another and acted as agents and/or  
4 principals of one another in connection with the conduct described herein.

5 31. Johnson & Johnson is the only company that owns more than 10% of Janssen  
6 Pharmaceuticals, Inc., and corresponds with the FDA regarding the drugs manufactured by  
7 Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Johnson & Johnson also paid prescribers to speak about opioids  
8 manufactured by Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. In short, Johnson & Johnson controls the sale and  
9 development of the drugs manufactured by Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc.  
10

11 32. Janssen manufacturers, promotes, sells, markets, and distributes opioids such as  
12 Duragesic, Nucynta, and Nucynta ER in the United States, including in the City of Tacoma.  
13 Janssen stopped manufacturing Nucynta and Nucynta ER in 2015.  
14

15 33. Duragesic and Nucynta ER are Schedule II opioids first approved in 1990 and  
16 2011 respectively.

17 34. Janssen generates substantial sales revenue from its opioids. For example,  
18 Duragesic accounted for more than \$1 billion in sales in 2009, and Nucynta and Nucynta ER  
19 accounted for \$172 million in sales in 2014.  
20

21 **John and Jane Does 1-100, inclusive**

22 35. The true names, roles, and/or capacities in the wrongdoing alleged herein of  
23 Defendants named John and Jane Does 1 through 100, inclusive, are currently unknown to  
24 Plaintiff, and thus, are named as Defendants under fictitious names as permitted by the rules of  
25 this Court. Plaintiff will amend this complaint and identify their true identities and their  
26

1 involvement in the wrongdoing at issue, as well as the specific causes of action asserted against  
2 them, if and when they become known.

### 3 **III. JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

4 36. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332. The  
5 Court also has federal question subject matter jurisdiction arising out of the City's RICO claims  
6 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 18 U.S.C. § 1961, *et seq.*

7 37. Venue in this Court is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

### 8 **IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

#### 9 **A. Opioids are causing unprecedented harm.**

10 38. Opioids are a class of drugs generally used to treat pain. They are derived in  
11 whole or in part from the opium poppy, the same substance from which morphine and heroin are  
12 made. Some opioids are also completely synthetic, but nevertheless contain the same properties  
13 as morphine and heroin.

14 39. As such, the term opioid is often used to refer to the entire family of opioids,  
15 including natural, synthetic, and semi-synthetic. The latter two categories of opioids are the focus  
16 of this complaint, and include drugs manufactured by Defendants.

17 40. Despite being one of the world's oldest known drugs, opioids have seen a  
18 dramatic rise to prominence in the last twenty years and are today commonly prescribed for pain.  
19 In fact, one in every five patients who present themselves to physicians' offices with non-cancer  
20 pain symptoms or pain-related diagnoses (including acute and chronic pain) receives an opioid  
21 prescription.<sup>10</sup>  
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<sup>10</sup> See *supra* note 3.

41. Over that same time period, opioid prescription sales have skyrocketed. Before the FDA approved OxyContin—which as described above is manufactured by Purdue—annual opioid sales hovered around \$1 billion. By 2015, they increased nearly ten-fold to almost \$10 billion:<sup>11</sup>



42. Increased revenues from opioids are the direct result of increased use of these drugs. As stated above, in 2016 alone, health care providers wrote more than 289 million prescriptions for opioid pain medication, enough for *every adult in the United States* to have at least one bottle of pills.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> David Crow, *Drugmakers hooked on \$10bn opioid habit*, Financial Times (Aug. 10, 2016), <https://www.ft.com/content/f6e989a8-5dac-11e6-bb77-a121aa8abd95?mhq5j=e1>.

<sup>12</sup> See *supra* note 1.

1           43.     Between 1991 and 2011, prescriptions of opioids in the U.S. tripled from 76  
2 million to 219 million per year.<sup>13</sup> Along with that increase in volume, the potency of prescription  
3 opioids also increased. By 2002, one in six opioid users were being prescribed drugs more  
4 powerful than morphine; by 2012 the ratio had doubled to one in three.<sup>14</sup>

5           44.     The increase in prescriptions coincided with a well-developed, deceptive, and  
6 misleading marketing and advertising campaign by Defendants which significantly downplayed  
7 the risks and grossly exaggerated the benefits of the drugs.

8           45.     Studies have shown that prescription opioids are simply ineffective tools in  
9 managing anything but end-of-life pain or acute pain over very short periods. Even though there  
10 are limited situations in which opioid use might be proper, the drugs have potential to cause  
11 incredible harm. Patients can quickly become addicted to opioids, despite Defendants'  
12 misleading statements that such addiction would not or could not happen. Sadly, because of  
13 Defendants' misleading statements and marketing, millions of Americans have become hooked  
14 on these deadly opioids.

15           46.     Defendants aggressively and relentlessly pushed to expand the use of their drugs,  
16 despite the fact that there has been little or no change in the amount of pain reported in the U.S.  
17 over the last twenty years. In fact, the majority of doctors and dentists who prescribe opioids are  
18 not pain specialists. For example, a 2014 study conducted by pharmacy benefit manager Express  
19 Scripts reviewing narcotic prescription data from 2011-2012 concluded that of the more than half  
20  
21  
22

23  
24 <sup>13</sup> Nora D. Volkow, MD, *America's Addiction to Opioids: Heroin and Prescription Drug Abuse*, Appearing before  
25 the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse (May 14, 2014),  
<https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/legislative-activities/testimony-to-congress/2016/americas-addiction-to-opioids-heroin-prescription-drug-abuse>.

26 <sup>14</sup> *America's opioid epidemic is worsening*, the Economist (Mar. 6, 2017),  
<https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2017/03/daily-chart-3>.

1 million prescribers of opioids during that time period, *only* 385 were identified as pain  
2 specialists.<sup>15</sup>

3 47. There is no controversy that the increase in prescriptions of opioids to treat pain is  
4 causing an epidemic in this country. For instance, from 1999 to 2015, the rate of opioid-related  
5 overdose deaths increased every year. In 1999, opioid overdose deaths totaled approximately  
6 4,030. In 2009, this number rose to 15,597. By 2015, that number rose to more than 33,000,  
7 nearly equal to the number of deaths from car crashes. The 33,000 opioid-related deaths in 2015  
8 represented approximately 63% of the more than 52,000 deaths caused by all drug overdoses.<sup>16</sup>

9 48. In total, *more than 183,000 deaths* from prescription opioids have been reported  
10 in the United States since 1999, and more than half of all opioid overdose deaths involve a  
11 prescription opioid, like those manufactured by Defendants.<sup>17</sup> In fact, in 2015, this opioid  
12 epidemic accounts for an average of 10.3 deaths per 100,000 people. Someone in the U.S. dies  
13 from an overdose of a prescription opioid every sixteen minutes, according to the CDC.  
14

15 49. To place these numbers in perspective, approximately 58,000 U.S. soldiers died in  
16 the Vietnam War, nearly 55,000 Americans died of car crashes at the peak of such deaths in  
17 1972, more than 43,000 died due to HIV/AIDS during that epidemic's peak in 1995, and nearly  
18 40,000 died of guns during the peak of firearm deaths in 1993.<sup>18</sup>  
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23 <sup>15</sup> *A Nation in Pain*, Express Scripts (Dec. 9, 2014), <http://lab.express-scripts.com/lab/publications/a-nation-in-pain>.

24 <sup>16</sup> *Overdose Death Rates*, NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse, <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates> (revised Jan. 2017).

25 <sup>17</sup> *Understanding the Epidemic*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,  
<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html> (last updated Aug. 30, 2017).

26 <sup>18</sup> German Lopez, *Drug overdose deaths skyrocketed in 2016 — and traditional opioid painkillers weren't the cause*, Vox (Sept. 5, 2017), <https://www.vox.com/platform/amp/policy-and-politics/2017/9/5/16255040/opioid-epidemic-overdose-death-2016>.

1           50. Further, in 2014, the most recent year for which this data is available, there were  
2 an astonishing 1.27 million emergency room visits or inpatient stays for opioid-related issues.<sup>19</sup>  
3 This is a dramatic increase over the approximately 366,000 emergency department visits related  
4 to the misuse or abuse of narcotic pain relievers in 2011.<sup>20</sup> By comparison, in 2011 these visits  
5 averaged 1,150 *per day*. In 2014, the average had climbed to nearly 3,500 visits per day.  
6

7           51. The direct harm caused by Defendants blanketing the country with opioids is  
8 staggering—indeed, it has been referred to as “the worst man-made epidemic in modern medical  
9 history.”<sup>21</sup>

10          52. The impact does not stop with prescription pills. As a direct result of opioid  
11 abuse, individuals who have become addicted to painkillers—but cannot afford their increased  
12 costs or are unable to secure a prescription—have turned to cheaper, more potent, and dangerous  
13 alternatives, primarily heroin, fueling another crisis in this country directly attributable to opioid  
14 abuse.  
15

16          53. The dramatic rise of this crisis is illustrated by the fact that between 2005 and  
17 2009, Mexican heroin production increased by over 600%. And between 2010 and 2014, the  
18 amount of heroin seized at the U.S.-Mexico border more than doubled.  
19  
20  
21  
22

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23 <sup>19</sup> Audrey J. Weiss, Ph.D., et al., *Patient Characteristics of Opioid-Related Inpatient Stays and Emergency*  
24 *Department Visits Nationally and by State, 2014*, HCUP Statistical Brief #224 (June 2017), [https://www.hcup-](https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb224-Patient-Characteristics-Opioid-Hospital-Stays-ED-Visits-by-State.pdf)  
25 [us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb224-Patient-Characteristics-Opioid-Hospital-Stays-ED-Visits-by-State.pdf](https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb224-Patient-Characteristics-Opioid-Hospital-Stays-ED-Visits-by-State.pdf).

26 <sup>20</sup> Elizabeth H. Crane, Ph.D., *Emergency Department Visits Involving Narcotic Pain Relievers*, Substance Abuse  
and Mental Health Services Administration (Nov. 5, 2017),  
[https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report\\_2083/ShortReport-2083.html](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report_2083/ShortReport-2083.html).

<sup>21</sup> Gary Franklin, M.D., *Warning: This Drug May Kill You*, HBO, [http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/warning-this-](http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/warning-this-drug-may-kill-you/video/how-did-we-get-here.html?autoplay=true)  
[drug-may-kill-you/video/how-did-we-get-here.html?autoplay=true](http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/warning-this-drug-may-kill-you/video/how-did-we-get-here.html?autoplay=true) (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).



1           54.     Heroin is not only more available but also more affordable. In fact, today, the  
2 average street value of a gram of heroin in Tacoma is approximately \$300, whereas in the late  
3 1990s and early 2000s, the average cost was approximately \$1,800 per gram.

4           55.     In 2016, the NEJM published an article examining the relationship between  
5 opioids and heroin use. The article concluded that “75% of [heroin] users initiated opioid use  
6 with prescription opioids.”<sup>22</sup> This study draws a direct line between Defendants’ deceptive  
7 marketing of opioids and the subsequent heroin epidemic in the United States, including in  
8 Tacoma.  
9

10          56.     The economic impact of the opioid crisis is devastating. The CDC recently  
11 estimated that the total economic burden of prescription opioid abuse costs the United States  
12 \$78.5 billion per year, which includes costs of health care, lost productivity, addiction treatment,  
13 and criminal justice involvement.<sup>23</sup> One quarter of these costs are borne by the public sector,  
14 including by municipalities like the City of Tacoma.<sup>24</sup>  
15

16          57.     As the director of the CDC recently stated: “America is awash in opioids; urgent  
17 action is critical.”<sup>25</sup>  
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23 <sup>22</sup> Wilson M. Compton, M.D., M.P.E., Christopher M. Jones, Pharm.D., M.P.H., and Grant T. Baldwin, Ph.D.,  
M.P.H., 374 N Engl J Med 154-63 (Jan. 14, 2106), <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMra1508490#ref41>.

24 <sup>23</sup> See *supra* note 2.

25 <sup>24</sup> Wolters Kluwer Health: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, *Costs of US prescription opioid epidemic estimated at*  
*\$78.5 billion*, *Science Daily* (Sept. 14, 2016), <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/09/160914105756.htm>.

26 <sup>25</sup> Thomas Frieden, M.D., CDC Chief Frieden: How to end America's growing opioid epidemic, FOX News (Dec.  
17, 2016), <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/12/17/exclusive-cdc-chief-frieden-how-to-end-americas-growing-opioid-epidemic.html>.

1 **B. Defendants made and continue to make false and misleading statements about**  
2 **opioids through various channels.**

3 58. Despite having knowledge of the profound and devastating impact of opioids on  
4 the American public, Defendants have made and continue to make misleading statements about  
5 the purported benefits, efficacy, and low risks of opioids—statements that Defendants have  
6 failed to completely correct. There is little doubt that today’s opiate epidemic stems from  
7 aggressive marketing tactics used by pharmaceutical companies over the past two decades.  
8 Indeed, a spokesperson for the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), a component of the  
9 National Institutes of Health (NIH), testified before Congress that “aggressive marketing by  
10 pharmaceutical companies” is a cause of the opioid abuse problem.<sup>26</sup>  
11

12 59. Defendants effectuated their deceptive marketing campaign by convincing  
13 doctors, patients, and the public, among others, that the benefits of using opioids to treat chronic  
14 pain outweighed any risks or dangers, and that opioids could be safely used by most patients.  
15 They did this despite knowing that the evidence suggesting opioids could be effectively used to  
16 treat long-term, chronic pain was and continues to be very weak, while the evidence to suggest  
17 opioids cause substantial harm was and continues to be very strong.  
18

19 60. In particular, Defendants disseminated this false and misleading information  
20 through three primary channels.<sup>27</sup>

21 61. **First**, Defendants communicated to doctors directly in the form of in-person visits  
22 and communications from sales representatives, continuing medical education programs, medical  
23 journals, advertisements, and websites.  
24

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25 <sup>26</sup> See *supra* note 13.

26 <sup>27</sup> Through these three avenues, Defendants made six specific categories of false and misleading statements about  
opioids, discussed in further detail below.

1           62. Defendants spent substantial sums and resources in making these  
2 communications. For example, Purdue spent more than \$200 million marketing OxyContin alone  
3 in 2001.<sup>28</sup>

4           63. Defendants' tactics through their sales representatives—also known as  
5 “detailers”—were particularly aggressive. In 2014, Defendants collectively spent well over \$100  
6 million on detailing branded opioids to doctors.

7           64. Defendants implemented lucrative bonus systems to encourage sales  
8 representatives to increase opioid sales in their territories, resulting in numerous repeat visits to  
9 physicians with high rates of opioid prescriptions, as well as a multifaceted information  
10 campaign targeting these physicians. For example, Purdue paid \$40 million in sales incentive  
11 bonuses to its sales representatives in 2001, with annual bonuses ranging from \$15,000 to nearly  
12 \$240,000.<sup>29</sup> In fact, from 1996 to 2000, Purdue increased its internal sales force from 318 sales  
13 representatives to 671, and its total physician call list from approximately 33,400 to 44,500 to  
14 approximately 70,500 to 94,000 physicians.<sup>30</sup>

15           65. Defendants have also spent substantial sums to purchase, manipulate, and analyze  
16 sophisticated data available from IMS Health Holdings, Inc.—a company that collects healthcare  
17 information including prescription data—to track the rates of initial prescribing and renewals by  
18 individual doctors, which in turn allows Defendants to customize their communications with  
19 each doctor. Defendants' use of this sophisticated marketing data was a cornerstone of their  
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24 <sup>28</sup> Mike Mariani, *How the American opiate epidemic was started by one pharmaceutical company*, The Week (Mar.  
25 4, 2015), <http://theweek.com/articles/541564/how-american-opiate-epidemic-started-by-pharmaceutical-company>.

26 <sup>29</sup> Art Van Zee, M.D., *The Promotion and Marketing of OxyContin: Commercial Triumph, Public Health Tragedy*,  
99(2) Am J Public Health 221-27 (Feb. 2009), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2622774/>.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

1 marketing plan.<sup>31</sup> Defendants, knowing full well how effective their detailing is, continue this  
2 data analysis to this day.

3         66. Defendants also identified doctors to serve as speakers or attend all-expense-paid  
4 trips to programs with speakers.<sup>32</sup> Defendants used these trips and programs—many of them  
5 quite lavish affairs—to incentivize the use of opioids while downplaying their risks, bombarding  
6 doctors with messages about the safety and efficacy of opioids for treating long-term pain.  
7 Although often couched in a veneer of scientific certainty, Defendants’ messages were false and  
8 misleading, and helped to ensure that millions of Americans would be exposed to the profound  
9 risks of these drugs.  
10

11         67. It is well documented that this type of pharmaceutical company symposium  
12 influences physicians’ prescribing, even though physicians who attend such symposia believe  
13 that such enticements do not alter their prescribing patterns.<sup>33</sup> For example, doctors who were  
14 invited to these all-expenses-paid weekends in resort locations like Boca Raton, Florida, and  
15 Scottsdale, Arizona, wrote twice as many prescriptions as those who did not attend.<sup>34</sup>  
16

17         68. Defendants also aggressively pursued family doctors and primary care physicians  
18 they knew were susceptible to their marketing campaigns. Defendants knew or should have  
19 known that these doctors relied on information provided by pharmaceutical companies when  
20 prescribing opioids, and that, as general practice doctors seeing a high volume of patients on a  
21 daily basis, they would be less likely to scrutinize the companies’ claims. Defendants’ marketing  
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24 <sup>31</sup> *Id.*

25 <sup>32</sup> *Id.*

26 <sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> Harriet Ryan, Lisa Girion and Scott Glover, *OxyContin goes global — “We’re only just getting started”*, Los Angeles Times (Dec. 18, 2016), <http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-me-oxycontin-part3/>.

1 tactics were so aggressive that in some offices, doctors considered hiring or designating  
2 employees to coordinate the various social activities to which the sales representatives  
3 consistently and almost daily invited these doctors.

4           69. Furthermore, Defendants knew or should have known the doctors they targeted  
5 were often poorly equipped to treat or manage pain comprehensibly, as they often had limited  
6 resources or time to address behavioral or cognitive aspects of pain treatment or to conduct the  
7 necessary research themselves to determine whether opioids were as beneficial as Defendants  
8 claimed. When Defendants presented these doctors with the marketing material that touted  
9 opioids' ability to easily and safely treat pain, many of these doctors began to view opioids as an  
10 efficient and effective way to treat their patients.  
11

12           70. These doctors, however, conducted limited due diligence of their own, and instead  
13 relied on Defendants' so-called evidence-based claims. Defendants knew or should have known  
14 that these doctors did not often have time to conduct their own research into the efficacy and  
15 risks of pharmaceuticals, and often rely heavily on materials provided by the drug companies.  
16

17           71. **Second**, Defendants funded, controlled, and operated third-party organizations  
18 that communicated to doctors, patients, and the public the benefits of opioids to treat chronic  
19 pain. These organizations—also known as “Front Groups”—gave off the impression they were  
20 independent and unbiased. These Front Groups published prescribing guidelines, unbranded  
21 materials, and other programs that promoted opioid treatment as a way to address patients'  
22 chronic pain. The Front Groups targeted doctors, patients, and lawmakers, all in coordinated  
23 efforts to promote opioid prescriptions.  
24  
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1           72.     There is absolutely no dispute that Defendants spent significant financial  
2 resources contributing to and working with these various Front Groups to increase the number of  
3 opioid prescriptions written.

4           73.     The most prominent Front Group utilized by Defendants was the American Pain  
5 Foundation (“APF”), which received more than \$10 million from opioid drug manufacturers,  
6 including Defendants, from 2007 through 2012. Purdue contributed \$1.7 million and Endo also  
7 contributed substantial sums to the APF.<sup>35</sup>

8           74.     Throughout its existence, APF’s operating budget was almost entirely comprised  
9 of contributions from opioid drug manufacturers. For instance, nearly 90% of APF’s \$5 million  
10 annual budget came from “donations” from some of the Defendants, and by 2011, APF was  
11 entirely dependent on grants from Defendants, including from Purdue and Endo. Not only did  
12 Defendants control APF’s purse strings, its board of directors was full of doctors who were on  
13 Defendants’ payrolls, either as consultants or speakers at medical events.<sup>36</sup>

14           75.     Although holding itself out as an independent advocacy group promoting patient  
15 well-being, APF consistently lobbied against federal and state proposals to limit opioid use.

16           76.     Another prominent Front Group was the American Academy of Pain Medicine  
17 (“AAPM”), which has received over \$2.2 million in funding since 2009 from opioid drug  
18 manufacturers, including Defendants. Like APF, AAPM held itself as an independent and non-  
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25 <sup>35</sup>Charles Ornstein and Tracy Weber, *The Champion of Painkillers*, ProPublica (Dec. 23, 2011),  
26 <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-champion-of-painkillers>.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

1 biased advocacy group representing physicians practicing in the field of pain medicine, but in  
2 fact was just another mouthpiece Defendants used to push opioids on doctors and patients.<sup>37</sup>

3 77. Both the APF and the AAPM published treatment guidelines and sponsored and  
4 hosted medical education programs that touted the benefits of opioids to treat chronic pain while  
5 minimizing and trivializing their risks. The treatment guidelines the Front Groups published—  
6 many of which are discussed in detail below—were particularly important to Defendants in  
7 ensuring widespread acceptance for opioid therapy to treat chronic pain. Defendants realized,  
8 just as the CDC has, that such treatment guidelines can “change prescribing practices,” because  
9 they appear to be unbiased sources of evidence-based information, even when they are in reality  
10 marketing materials.  
11

12 78. For instance, the AAPM, in conjunction with the American Pain Society (“APS”),  
13 issued comprehensive guidelines in 2009 titled “Guideline for the Use of Chronic Opioid  
14 Therapy in Chronic Noncancer Pain – Evidence Review” (“2009 Guidelines”). The 2009  
15 Guidelines promoted opioids as “safe and effective” for treating chronic pain, despite  
16 acknowledging limited evidence to support this statement. Unsurprisingly, Defendants have  
17 widely referenced and promoted these guidelines, issued by Front Groups they funded and  
18 controlled. These 2009 Guidelines are still available online today.<sup>38</sup>  
19  
20

21 79. In addition, Defendants participated in the Pain Care Forum, a coalition of drug  
22 makers, trade groups, and nonprofit organizations. From 2006 to 2015, participants in the Pain  
23

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24 <sup>37</sup> Tracy Weber and Charles Ornstein, *Two Leaders in Pain Treatment Have Long Ties to Drug Industry*, ProPublica  
25 (Dec. 23, 2011), <https://www.propublica.org/article/two-leaders-in-pain-treatment-have-long-ties-to-drug-industry>.

26 <sup>38</sup> *Clinical Guideline for the Use of Chronic Opioid Therapy in Chronic Noncancer Pain*, American Pain Society,  
<http://americanpainsociety.org/uploads/education/guidelines/chronic-opioid-therapy-cnep.pdf> (last visited Sept. 7,  
2017).

1 Care Forum spent over \$740 million lobbying in the nation's capital and in all fifty statehouses  
2 on an array of issues, including opioid-related measures. The collective spending on lobbying  
3 and campaigns amounts to more than two hundred times the \$4 million spent during the same  
4 period by the handful of groups that work to warn the public about the dangers of opioids and  
5 lobby for restrictions on painkillers.<sup>39</sup>

7 80. Defendants have also targeted specific groups to encourage opioid prescribing  
8 practices. One such group, a University of Wisconsin-based organization known as the Pain &  
9 Policy Studies Group, received \$2.5 million from pharmaceutical companies to promote opioid  
10 use and discourage the passing of regulations against opioid use in medical practice. The Pain &  
11 Policy Studies Group wields considerable influence over the nation's medical schools as well as  
12 within the medical field in general.<sup>40</sup> Purdue was the largest contributor to the Pain & Policy  
13 Studies Group, paying approximately \$1.6 million between 1999 and 2010.<sup>41</sup>

15 81. Through these third-party organizations, Defendants also engaged in unbranded  
16 advertising to generally tout the benefits of opioids without specifically naming a particular  
17 brand of opioid. Unbranded marketing does not refer to a specific drug, but promotes a type of  
18 treatment generally, and unbranded materials are not typically reviewed by the FDA.  
19 Conversely, branded marketing, which identifies and promotes a specific drug, is subject to FDA  
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23 <sup>39</sup> Matthew Perrone and Ben Wieder, *Pro-painkiller echo chamber shaped policy amid drug epidemic*, AP News  
(Sept. 19, 2016), <https://apnews.com/3d257452c24a410f98e8e5a4d9d448a7/pro-painkiller-echo-chamber-shaped-policy-amid-drug>.

24 <sup>40</sup> *The Role of Pharmaceutical Companies in the Opioid Epidemic*, Addictions.com,  
25 <https://www.addictions.com/opiate/the-role-of-pharmaceutical-companies-in-the-opioid-epidemic/> (last visited  
Sept. 7, 2017).

26 <sup>41</sup> John Fauber, *UW group ends drug firm funds*, Journal Sentinel (Apr. 20, 2011),  
<http://archive.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/120331689.html>.



1 review, must be consistent with its label and supported by substantial scientific evidence, and  
2 must not include false or misleading statements or material omissions.

3 82. By engaging in unbranded advertising, Defendants were and are able to avoid  
4 FDA review and issue general statements to the public declaring that opioids improve function,  
5 that addiction usually does not occur, and that withdrawal can easily be managed.  
6

7 83. **Third**, Defendants retained highly credentialed medical professionals to promote  
8 the purported benefits and minimal risks of opioids. These medical professionals are also known  
9 as “Key Opinions Leaders” or “KOLs.”

10 84. Defendants paid substantial amounts to KOLs to present at Continuing Medical  
11 Education (“CME”) seminars and conferences, and to serve on their advisory boards and on the  
12 boards of third-party organizations described above.  
13

14 85. Like the Front Groups, the KOLs gave the impression they were independent  
15 sources of unbiased information, while touting the benefits of opioids through their  
16 presentations, articles, and books. KOLs also served on committees and helped develop  
17 guidelines such as the 2009 Guidelines described above that strongly encouraged the use of  
18 opioids to treat chronic pain.

19 86. Two key KOLs were Russell Portenoy and Kathleen Foley. Defendants utilized  
20 both individuals repeatedly and consistently for several years to tout the benefits and minimize  
21 the risks of opioids.  
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1           87. In recent years, some of Defendants' KOLs have conceded that many of their past  
2 claims in support of opioid use lacked evidence or support in the scientific literature.<sup>42</sup> In fact,  
3 Dr. Portenoy specifically admitted that he overstated the drugs' benefits and glossed over their  
4 risks, claiming: "Did I teach about pain management, specifically about opioid therapy, in a way  
5 that reflects misinformation? Well, against the standards of 2012, I guess I did . . . We didn't  
6 know then what we know now."<sup>43</sup>

7  
8           88. While such acknowledgments of past misstatements and misrepresentations are  
9 important to correct the tidal wave of misinformation that Defendants are responsible for, they  
10 have been insufficient to undo the harm the past statements created or alter the opioid addictions  
11 that resulted from these misrepresentations. And although some of the KOLs have acknowledged  
12 their past misstatements, many of them continue to appear nationwide, including in the City of  
13 Tacoma, and their dangerous and false messages live on.

14  
15           89. Through these three primary channels—all of which Defendants controlled,  
16 funded, and facilitated, and for which they are legally responsible—Defendants ultimately made  
17 false or misleading statements about opioids despite the lack of scientific evidence to support  
18 their claims.

19           90. Specifically, Defendants have made and/or continue to make false or misleading  
20 claims in six primary areas: (1) the low risk of addiction to opioids, (2) the need to prescribe  
21 more opioids to treat pain, (3) risk-mitigation strategies to safely prescribe opioids, including  
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23

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24 <sup>42</sup> See, e.g., John Fauber, *Painkiller boom fueled by networking*, Journal Sentinel (Feb. 19, 2012),  
25 [http://archive.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/painkiller-boom-fueled-by-networking-dp3p2rn-  
139609053.html/](http://archive.jsonline.com/watchdog/watchdogreports/painkiller-boom-fueled-by-networking-dp3p2rn-139609053.html/) (finding that a key Endo KOL acknowledged that opioid marketing went too far).

26 <sup>43</sup> Thomas Catan and Evan Perez, *A Pain-Drug Champion Has Second Thoughts*, The Wall Street Journal (Dec. 17,  
2012), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324478304578173342657044604>.

1 tapering, (4) the lack of risk associated with higher dosages of opioids, (5) the benefits of abuse-  
2 deterrent technology to curb abuse, and (6) that long-term opioid use improves patient function  
3 and quality of life. These illustrative but non-exhaustive categories of Defendants'  
4 misrepresentations about opioids are described in detail below.

5 **1. Defendants falsely claimed that the risk of opioid addiction was low.**

6  
7 91. Each Defendant has made a series of false and misleading statements about the  
8 low risk of addiction to opioids over the past twenty years. Each Defendant has also failed to  
9 take sufficient remedial measures to correct its false and misleading statements.

10 92. One of the primary and specific claims made by Defendants was that addiction  
11 was actually rare in patients treated with opioids. In support of this statement, Defendants cited  
12 the 1980 NEJM letter which stated that the “development of addiction is rare in medical patients  
13 with no history of addiction.”<sup>44</sup> Though the letter’s authors stated that they examined the files of  
14 11,882 patients, no analysis was included in the letter.

15  
16 93. In addition, the study referenced in the letter analyzed a database of hospitalized  
17 patients who were given doses of opioids in a controlled setting to ease suffering from acute  
18 pain. These patients were not given long-term opioid prescriptions, nor were they given opioids  
19 to administer to themselves at home; rather they were treated with opioids under in-hospital  
20 doctor supervision.

21  
22 94. Defendants nevertheless used the letter to tout the purportedly low risk of  
23 addiction to the drugs, generally. For example, in its 1996 press release announcing the release of  
24 OxyContin, Purdue advertised that the “fear of addiction is exaggerated” and quoted the  
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26  

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<sup>44</sup> See *supra* note 5.

1 chairman of the American Pain Society Quality of Care Committee, who claimed that “there is  
2 very little risk of addiction from the proper uses of these [opioid] drugs for pain relief.”<sup>45</sup>

3  
4 PR Newswire

5 May 31, 1996, Friday - 15:47 Eastern Time

6 **NEW HOPE FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS SUFFERING FROM**  
7 **PERSISTENT**

8 **The fear of addiction is exaggerated.**

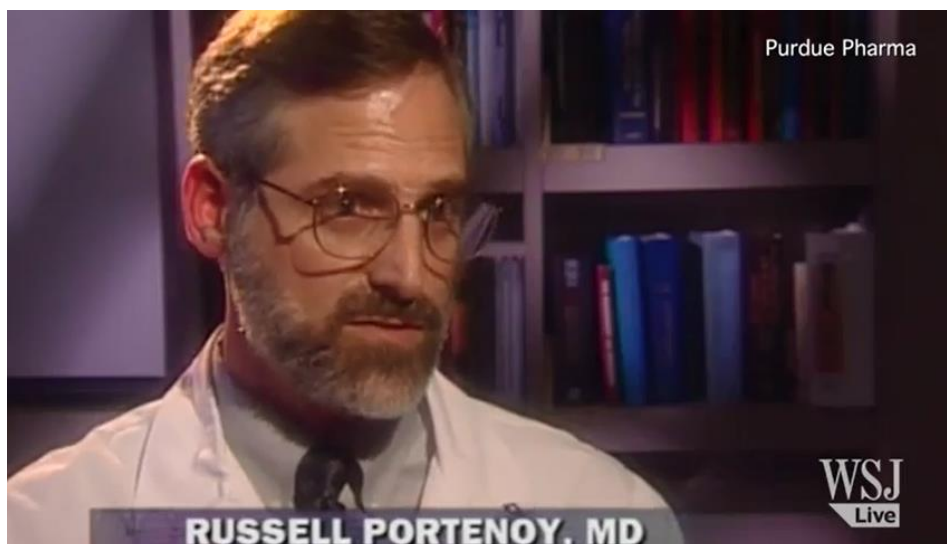
9 One cause of patient resistance to appropriate pain treatment – the  
10 fear of addiction – is largely unfounded. According to Dr. Max,  
11 “Experts agree that most pain caused by surgery or cancer can be  
relieved, primarily by carefully adjusting the dose of opioid  
(narcotic) pain reliever to each patient’s need, and that there is very  
little risk of addiction from the proper uses of these drugs for pain  
relief.”

12 Paul D. Goldenheim, M.D., Vice President of **Purdue Pharma** L.P. in  
13 Norwalk, Connecticut, agrees with this assessment. “Proper use of  
14 medication is an essential weapon in the battle against persistent  
pain. But too often fear, misinformation and poor communication stand  
in the way of their legitimate use.”

15 95. Dr. Portenoy, a paid Purdue KOL as mentioned previously, also stated in a  
16 promotional video from the 1990s that “the likelihood that the treatment of pain using an opioid  
17 drug which is prescribed by a doctor will lead to addiction is extremely low.”<sup>46</sup>  
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25 <sup>45</sup> Press Release, OxyContin, *New Hope for Millions of Americans Suffering from Persistent Pain: Long-Acting*  
26 *OxyContin Tablets Now Available to Relieve Pain* (May 31, 1996), <http://documents.latimes.com/oxycontin-press-release-1996/>.

<sup>46</sup> See *supra* note 43.



96. Purdue also specifically used the 1980 NEJM letter in its 1998 promotional video “I got my life back,” in which Dr. Alan Spanos says “In fact, the rate of addiction amongst pain patients who are treated by doctors *is much less than 1%*.”<sup>47</sup>



<sup>47</sup> Our Amazing World, *Purdue Pharma OxyContin Commercial*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Er78DjShyeI> (last visited Sept. 7, 2017) (emphasis added).

1           97.     The 1980 NEJM letter was also used on Purdue’s “Partners Against Pain”  
2 website, which was available in the early 2000s, where Purdue claimed that the addiction risk  
3 with OxyContin was very low.<sup>48</sup>

4           98.     The 1980 NEJM letter was used frequently in literature given to physicians, and  
5 in literature given to patients who were prescribed OxyContin.<sup>49</sup>

6           99.     Additionally, Dr. Portenoy used the 1980 NEJM letter as a source in his landmark  
7 1986 paper on the chronic use of opioids, which was based on just 38 patients, all of whom were  
8 cancer patients.<sup>50</sup> Because only two of the 38 patients examined became addicted, Portenoy  
9 concluded that “opioid maintenance therapy can be a safe, salutary and more humane alternative  
10 to the options of surgery or no treatment in those patients with intractable non-malignant pain  
11 and no history of drug abuse . . .”<sup>51</sup>

12           100.    Purdue also consistently tried to steer any concern away from addiction, and focus  
13 on its false claims that opioids were effective and safe for dealing with chronic pain. At a hearing  
14 before the House of Representatives’ Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the  
15 Committee on Energy and Commerce in August 2001, Michael Friedman, Executive Vice  
16 President and Chief Operating Officer of Purdue, testified that “even the most vocal critics of  
17 opioid therapy concede the value of OxyContin in the legitimate treatment of pain,” and that  
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23 <sup>48</sup> See *supra* note 29.

24 <sup>49</sup> Art Van Zee, M.D., *The OxyContin Abuse Problem: Spotlight on Purdue Pharma’s Marketing* (Aug. 22, 2001),  
<https://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/dockets/01n0256/c000297-A.pdf>.

25 <sup>50</sup> Russel K. Portenoy and Kathleen M. Foley, *Chronic Use of Opioid Analgesics in Non-Malignant Pain: Report of*  
*38 Cases*, 25 Pain 171-86 (1986),  
26 <https://fellowiki.wikispaces.com/file/view/PAIN+CHRONIC+USE+OF+OPIOIDS.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

1 “OxyContin has proven itself an effective weapon in the fight against pain, returning many  
2 patients to their families, to their work, and to their ability to enjoy life.”<sup>52</sup>

3 101. At this same hearing, Purdue continued to emphasize “legitimate” treatment,  
4 dismissing cases of overdose and death as something that would not befall “legitimate” patients:  
5 “Virtually all of these reports involve people who are abusing the medication, not patients with  
6 legitimate medical needs under the treatment of a healthcare professional.”<sup>53</sup>

7  
8 102. Purdue spun this baseless “legitimate use” distinction out even further in a patient  
9 brochure about OxyContin, called “A Guide to Your New Pain Medicine and How to Become a  
10 Partner Against Pain.” In response to the question, “Aren’t opioid pain medications like  
11 OxyContin Tablets ‘addicting’? Even my family is concerned about this,” Purdue claimed that  
12 there was no need to worry about addiction if taking opioids for legitimate, “medical” purposes:  
13

14 Drug addiction means using a drug to get “high” rather than to relieve pain. You  
15 are taking opioid pain medication for medical purposes. The medical purposes are  
16 clear and the effects are beneficial, not harmful.

17 103. Similarly, a Senior Medical Director for Purdue, Dr. David Haddox, cavalierly  
18 stated, “[w]hen this medicine is used appropriately to treat pain under a doctor’s care, it is not  
19 only effective, it is safe.”<sup>54</sup> He went so far as to compare OxyContin to celery, because even  
20 celery would be harmful if injected: “If I gave you a stalk of celery and you ate that, it would be  
21  
22  
23

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24 <sup>52</sup> *Oxycontin: Its Use and Abuse: Hearing Before the H. Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the Comm.*  
25 *on Energy and Commerce*, 107th Cong. 1 (Aug. 28, 2001) (statement of Michael Friedman, Executive Vice  
26 President, Chief Operating Officer, Purdue Pharma, L.P.), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-107hhrg75754/html/CHRG-107hhrg75754.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> Roger Alford, *Deadly OxyContin abuse expected to spread in the U.S.*, *Charleston Gazette*, Feb. 9, 2001.

1 healthy for you. But if you put it in a blender and tried to shoot it into your veins, it would not be  
2 good.”<sup>55</sup>

3 104. Purdue sales representatives also repeated these misstatements regarding the low  
4 risk for addiction to doctors across the country.<sup>56</sup> Its sales representatives targeted primary care  
5 physicians in particular, downplaying the risk of addiction and, as one doctor observed,  
6 “promot[ing] among primary care physicians a more liberal use of opioids.”<sup>57</sup> Purdue also  
7 marketed OxyContin for a wide variety of conditions and to doctors who were not adequately  
8 trained in pain management.<sup>58</sup>

10 105. As of 2003, Purdue’s Patient Information guide for OxyContin contained the  
11 following language regarding addiction:

12  
13 Concerns about abuse, addiction, and diversion should not prevent the proper management of pain.  
14 The development of addiction to opioid analgesics in properly managed patients with pain has been  
reported to be rare. However, data are not available to establish the true incidence of addiction in  
chronic pain patients.

15 106. Although Purdue has acknowledged it has made some misrepresentations about  
16 the safety of its opioids,<sup>59</sup> it has done nothing to address the ongoing harms of their  
17 misrepresentations; in fact, it continues to make those misrepresentations today.  
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21 <sup>55</sup> *Id.*

22 <sup>56</sup> Barry Meier, *In Guilty Plea, OxyContin Maker to Pay \$600 Million*, The New York Times (May 10, 2007),  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/10/business/11drug-web.html>.

23 <sup>57</sup> See *supra* note 29.

24 <sup>58</sup> *OxyContin Abuse and Diversion and Efforts to Address the Problem*, U.S. General Accounting Office Report to  
Congressional Requesters (Dec. 2003), <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04110.pdf>.

25 <sup>59</sup> Following the conviction in 2007 of three of its executives for misbranding OxyContin, Purdue released a  
statement in which they acknowledged their false statements. “Nearly six years and longer ago, some employees  
made, or told other employees to make, certain statements about OxyContin to some health care professionals that  
were inconsistent with the F.D.A.-approved prescribing information for OxyContin and the express warnings it  
contained about risks associated with the medicine. The statements also violated written company policies  
requiring adherence to the prescribing information.”



1           107. Defendant Endo also made dubious claims about the low risk of addiction. For  
2 instance, it sponsored a website, PainKnowledge.com, on which in 2009 it claimed that “[p]eople  
3 who take opioids as prescribed usually do not become addicted.”<sup>60</sup> The website has since been  
4 taken down.

5           108. In another website, PainAction.com—which is still currently available today—  
6 Endo also claimed that “most chronic pain patients do not become addicted to the opioid  
7 medications that are prescribed for them.”<sup>61</sup>

8           109. In addition, Endo made statements in pamphlets and publications that most health  
9 care providers who treat people with pain agree that most people do not develop an addiction  
10 problem, and that taking opioids for pain relief is not an addiction. These statements also  
11 appeared on websites sponsored by Endo, such as Opana.com.  
12

13           110. In its currently active website, PrescribeResponsibly.com, Defendant Janssen  
14 states that concerns about opioid addiction are “overestimated” and that “true addiction occurs  
15 only in a small percentage of patients.”<sup>62</sup>  
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24 <sup>60</sup> German Lopez, *US officials are starting to treat opioid companies like Big Tobacco—and suing them*, Vox (Aug.  
25 9, 2017), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/6/7/15724054/opioid-companies-epidemic-lawsuits>.

26 <sup>61</sup> *Opioid medication and addiction*, Pain Action (Aug. 17, 2017), <https://www.painaction.com/opioid-medication-addiction/>.

<sup>62</sup> Keith Candiotti, M.D., *Use of Opioid Analgesics in Pain Management*, Prescribe Responsibly,  
<http://www.prescriberesponsibly.com/articles/opioid-pain-management> (last modified Jul. 2, 2015).

# Use of Opioid Analgesics in Pain Management



## *Other Opioid Analgesic Concerns*

Aside from medical issues related to opioid analgesics, there are nonmedical issues that may have an impact on prescribing patterns and patient use of these drugs. Practitioners are often concerned about prescribing opioid analgesics due to potential legal issues and questions of addiction.<sup>15,16</sup> By the same token, patients report similar concerns about developing an addiction to opioid analgesics.<sup>17</sup> While these concerns are not without some merit, it would appear that they are often overestimated. According to clinical opinion polls, true addiction occurs only in a small percentage of patients with chronic pain who receive chronic opioid analgesics analgesic therapy.<sup>18</sup>



111. Similarly, in a 2009 patient education video titled “Finding Relief: Pain Management for Older Adults,” Janssen sponsored a video by the American Academy of Pain Medicine that indicated that opioids are rarely addictive. The video has since been taken down.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Molly Huff, *Finding Relief: Pain Management for Older Adults*, Centers for Pain Management (Mar. 9, 2011), <http://www.managepains.com/news/-Finding-Relief-Pain-Management-for-Older-Adults>.

1 112. Janssen also approved and distributed a patient education guide in 2009 that  
2 attempted to counter the “myth” that opioids are addictive, claiming that “[m]any studies show  
3 that opioids are rarely addictive when used properly for the management of chronic pain.”<sup>64</sup>

4 113. In addition, all three Defendants used third parties and Front Groups to further  
5 their false and misleading statements about the safety of opioids.  
6

7 114. For example, in testimony for the Hearing to Examine the Effects of the Painkiller  
8 OxyContin, Focusing on Risks and Benefits, in front of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and  
9 Pensions Committee in February 2002, Dr. John D. Giglio, Executive Director of the APF, the  
10 organization which, as described above, received the majority of its funding from opioid  
11 manufacturers, including Purdue, stated that “opioids are safe and effective, and only in rare  
12 cases lead to addiction.”<sup>65</sup>  
13

14 115. The APF further backed up Purdue in an amicus curiae brief filed in an Ohio  
15 appeals court in December 2002, in which it claimed that “medical leaders have come to  
16 understand that the small risk of abuse does not justify the withholding of these highly effective  
17 analgesics from chronic pain patients.”<sup>66</sup>

18 116. In a 2007 publication titled “Treatment Options: A Guide for People Living with  
19 Pain,” APF downplayed the risk of addiction and argued that concern about this risk should not  
20 prevent people from taking opioids: “Restricting access to the most effective medications for  
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23 <sup>64</sup> See *supra* note 60.

24 <sup>65</sup> *Oxycontin: Balancing Risks and Benefits: Hearing of the S. Comm. on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions*,  
107th Cong. 2 (Feb. 12, 2002) (testimony of John D. Giglio, M.A., J.D., Executive Director, American Pain  
Foundation), <https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Giglio.pdf>.

25 <sup>66</sup> Brief Amici Curiae of American Pain Foundation, National Foundation for the Treatment of Pain, and The Ohio  
26 Pain Initiative, in Support of Defendants/Appellants, *Howland v. Purdue Pharma, L.P., et al.*, Appeal No. CA  
2002 09 0220 (Butler Co., Ohio 12th Court of Appeals, Dec. 23, 2002),  
<https://ia801005.us.archive.org/23/items/279014-howland-apf-amicus/279014-howland-apf-amicus.pdf>.

1 treating pain is not the solution to drug abuse or addiction.” APF also tried to normalize the  
2 dangers of opioids by listing opioids as one of several “[c]ommon drugs that can cause physical  
3 dependence,” including steroids, certain heart medications, and caffeine.

4 117. As set forth in more detail below, these statements were false and misleading as  
5 evidenced by, *inter alia*, the findings made by the CDC in 2016.

6  
7 **2. Defendants falsely instructed doctors and patients that more opioids were the**  
8 **solution when patients presented symptoms of addiction.**

9 118. Not only did Defendants hide the serious risks of addiction associated with  
10 opioids, they actively worked to prevent doctors from taking steps to prevent or address opioid  
11 addiction in their patients.

12 119. One way that Defendants worked to obstruct appropriate responses to opioid  
13 addiction was to push a concept called “pseudoaddiction.” Dr. David Haddox—who later  
14 became a Senior Medical Director for Purdue—published a study in 1989 coining the term,  
15 which he characterized as “the iatrogenic syndrome of abnormal behavior developing as a direct  
16 consequence of inadequate pain management.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, he claimed that people on  
17 prescription opioids who exhibited classic signs of addiction were not, in fact, addicted to  
18 opioids, but rather simply suffering from improperly managed pain—specifically, under-  
19 treatment. His solution for “pseudoaddiction”? More opioids. Although this concept was formed  
20 based on a single case study, it proved to be a favorite trope in Defendants’ marketing schemes.

21  
22 120. For example, using this study, Purdue informed doctors and patients that signs of  
23 addiction are actually the signs of under-treated pain which should be treated with even more  
24

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26 <sup>67</sup> David E. Weissman and J. David Haddox, *Opioid pseudoaddiction--an iatrogenic syndrome*, 36(3) Pain 363-66  
(Mar. 1989), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2710565>.

1 opioids. Purdue reassured doctors and patients, telling them, without any apparent evidence, that  
2 “chronic pain has been historically undertreated.”<sup>68</sup>

3 121. Defendants continued to spread the concept of pseudoaddiction through the APF,  
4 which even went so far as to compare opioid addicts to coffee drinkers. In a 2002 court filing,  
5 APF wrote that “[m]any pain patients (like daily coffee drinkers) claim they are ‘addicted’ when  
6 they experience withdrawal symptoms associated with physical dependence as they decrease  
7 their dose. But unlike actual addicts, such individuals, if they resume their opioid use, will only  
8 take enough medication to alleviate their pain . . .”<sup>69</sup>

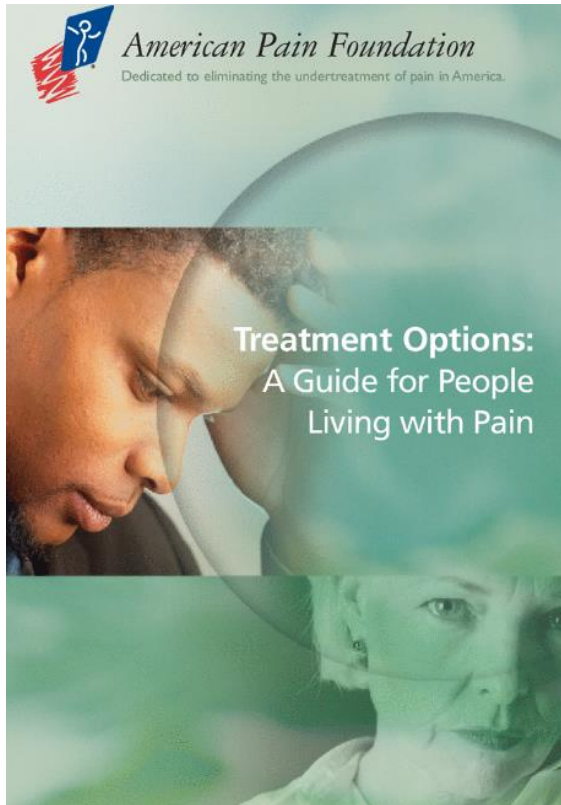
10 122. In a 2007 publication titled “Treatment Options: A Guide for People Living with  
11 Pain,” the APF claimed: “*Physical dependence is normal*; any patient who is taking an opioid on  
12 a regular basis for a few days should be assumed to be physically dependent. This does **NOT**  
13 mean you are addicted.”<sup>70</sup> In this same publication, when describing behaviors of addiction, the  
14 APF again used the idea of pseudoaddiction, claiming that people who are not substance abusers  
15 may also engage in behaviors that mirror those of actual addicts.  
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24 <sup>68</sup> See *supra* note 52.

25 <sup>69</sup> See *supra* note 66.

26 <sup>70</sup> *Treatment Options: A Guide for People Living with Pain*, American Pain Foundation,  
<https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/277605/apf-treatmentoptions.pdf> (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).



#### Side effects

The most common side effects of opioids include constipation, nausea and vomiting, sedation (sleepiness), mental clouding and itching. Some people may also experience dizziness or difficulty urinating. Respiratory depression, a decreased rate and depth of breathing, is a serious side effect associated with overdose.

The good news is that most side effects go away after a few days. However, side effects may continue in some people. Constipation is most likely to persist. Some pain experts believe all patients started on an opioid also should be taking a stool softener or a laxative. Others believe that this treatment is appropriate only if a patient is prone to developing significant constipation because of advanced age, poor diet, other diseases, or the use of other constipating drugs. Your healthcare provider can give advice on what to eat and what medicines to use to treat constipation. Always make certain to drink plenty of fluids and be as active as possible.

If any of the other side effects don't go away, they can also be treated. Be certain to tell your provider if you are having any problems. Serious side effects such as delirium or respiratory depression can occur if the dose is increased too quickly, especially in someone who is just starting to take opioids. Tell your provider if you are unable to concentrate or think clearly after you have been taking an opioid for a few days. Report other medications you may be taking that make you sleepy. Do not drive when you first start taking these drugs or immediately after the dose has been increased. Most persons will adapt to these medicines over time and can drive safely while taking them for pain control. If side effects remain troublesome, your provider may switch you to a different opioid. The amount of pain relief can be maintained after such a switch and often the side effects can be reduced.

#### Common drugs that can cause physical dependence

- Opioids
- Stimulants
- Sedatives
- Steroids
- Certain Antidepressants
- Certain Heart Medications
- Caffeine

#### Tolerance, physical dependence and addiction

You and your healthcare provider may worry about tolerance, physical dependence and addiction. It's sometimes easy to confuse the meaning of these words. Tolerance refers to the situation in which a drug becomes less effective over time. However, many persons with persistent pain don't develop tolerance and stay on the same dose of opioid for a long time. Many times when a person needs a larger dose of a drug, it's because their pain is worse or the problem causing their pain has changed.

Physical dependence means that a person will develop symptoms and signs of withdrawal (e.g., sweating, rapid heart rate, nausea, diarrhea, goosebumps, anxiety) if the drug is suddenly stopped or the dose is lowered too quickly. **Physical dependence is normal; any patient who is taking an opioid on a regular basis for a few days should be assumed to be physically dependent. This does NOT mean you are addicted. In fact, many non-addictive drugs can produce physical dependence.** To prevent withdrawal from occurring, the dose of the medication must be decreased slowly.

If you believe that you no longer need to take the opioid medication or want to reduce the dose, it is essential to speak to your provider. They will guide you on how to decrease your dose over time to prevent the experience of withdrawal.

123. Purdue published a Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy ("REMS") for OxyContin in 2010, and in the associated Healthcare Provider Training Guide stated that "[b]ehaviors that suggest drug abuse exist on a continuum, and pain-relief seeking behavior can be mistaken for drug-seeking behavior."<sup>71</sup>

124. Purdue worked, and continues to work, to create confusion about what addiction is. For example, Purdue continues to emphasize that abuse and addiction are separate and distinct from physical dependence. Regardless of whether these statements may be technically correct, they continue to add ambiguity over the risks and benefits of opioids.

<sup>71</sup>OxyContin Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy, Purdue Pharma L.P., <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/UCM220990.pdf> (last modified Nov. 2010).



1           125. Endo sponsored a National Initiative on Pain Control (NIPC) CME program in  
2 2009 which promoted the concept of pseudoaddiction by teaching that a patient's aberrant  
3 behavior was the result of untreated pain. Endo substantially controlled NIPC by funding its  
4 projects, developing content, and reviewing NIPC materials.

5           126. A 2001 study which was authored by a doctor affiliated with Janssen stated that  
6 "[m]any patients presenting to a doctor's office asking for pain medications are accused of drug  
7 seeking. In reality, most of these patients may be undertreated for their pain syndrome."<sup>72</sup>

8           127. In 2009, on a website it sponsored, Janssen stated that pseudoaddiction is different  
9 from true addiction "because such behaviors can be resolved with effective pain management."<sup>73</sup>

10           128. Indeed, on its currently active website PrescribeResponsibly.com, Janssen defines  
11 pseudoaddiction as "a syndrome that causes patients to seek additional medications due to  
12 inadequate pharmacotherapy being prescribed. Typically, when the pain is treated appropriately,  
13 the inappropriate behavior ceases."<sup>74</sup>  
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22 <sup>72</sup> Howard A. Heit, MD, FACP, FASAM, *The truth about pain management: the difference between a pain patient*  
23 *and an addicted patient*, 5 *European Journal of Pain* 27-29 (2001),  
<http://www.med.uottawa.ca/courses/totalpain/pdf/doc-34.pdf>.

24 <sup>73</sup> Chris Morran, *Ohio: Makers Of OxyContin, Percocet & Other Opioids Helped Fuel Drug Epidemic By*  
25 *Misleading Doctors, Patients*, *Consumerist* (May 31, 2017), [https://consumerist.com/2017/05/31/ohio-makers-of-](https://consumerist.com/2017/05/31/ohio-makers-of-oxycontin-percocet-other-opioids-helped-fuel-drug-epidemic-by-misleading-doctors-patients/)  
26 [oxycontin-percocet-other-opioids-helped-fuel-drug-epidemic-by-misleading-doctors-patients/](https://consumerist.com/2017/05/31/ohio-makers-of-oxycontin-percocet-other-opioids-helped-fuel-drug-epidemic-by-misleading-doctors-patients/).

<sup>74</sup> Howard A. Heit, MD, FACP, FASAM and Douglas L. Gourlay, MD, MSc, FRCPC, FASAM, *What a Prescriber*  
*Should Know Before Writing the First Prescription, Prescribe Responsibly*,  
<http://www.prescriberesponsibly.com/articles/before-prescribing-opioids#pseudoaddiction> (last modified July 2,  
2015).

# What a Prescriber Should Know Before Writing the First Prescription



TABLE 1: Definitions

8. **Pseudoaddiction** is a syndrome that causes patients to seek additional medications due to inadequate pharmacotherapy being prescribed. Typically when the pain is treated appropriately, the inappropriate behavior ceases.<sup>25</sup>



129. As set forth in more detail below, these statements were false and misleading as evidenced by, *inter alia*, the findings made by the CDC in 2016.

**3. Defendants falsely claimed that risk-mitigation strategies, including tapering, could safely address any concerns about addiction.**

130. Even when Defendants acknowledge there are addiction risks in the use of opioids, they dismiss these concerns by claiming that addiction can be easily avoided and addressed through simple steps. In other words, Defendants falsely communicated to doctors and patients that certain screening tools would allow them to reliably identify risks and safely



1 prescribe opioids to patients, and that tapering the dose would be sufficient to manage cessation  
2 of opioid treatment. Both assertions are false.

3 131. For instance, as noted above, Purdue published a REMS for OxyContin in 2010,  
4 in which it described certain steps that needed to be followed for safe opioid use. Purdue stressed  
5 that all patients should be screened for their risk of abuse or addiction, and that such screening  
6 could curb the incidence of addiction.<sup>75</sup>

7  
8 132. The APF also proclaimed in a 2007 booklet, sponsored in part by Purdue, that  
9 “[p]eople with the disease of addiction may abuse their medications, engaging in unacceptable  
10 behaviors like increasing the dose without permission or obtaining the opioid from multiple  
11 sources, among other things. Opioids get into the hands of drug dealers and persons with an  
12 addictive disease as a result of pharmacy theft, forged prescriptions, Internet sales, and even  
13 from other people with pain. It is a problem in our society that needs to be addressed through  
14 many different approaches.”<sup>76</sup>

15  
16 133. On its current website for OxyContin,<sup>77</sup> Purdue acknowledges that certain patients  
17 have higher risk of opioid addiction based on history of substance abuse or mental illness—a  
18 statement which, even if accurate, obscures the significant risk of addiction for all patients,  
19 including those without such a history, and comports with statements it has recently made that it  
20 is “bad apple” patients, and not the opioids, that are arguably the source of the opioid crisis:  
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25 <sup>75</sup> See *supra* note 71.

26 <sup>76</sup> See *supra* note 70.

<sup>77</sup> OxyContin, <https://www.oxycontin.com/index.html> (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).

1 Assess each patient's risk for opioid addiction,  
2 abuse, or misuse prior to prescribing  
3 OxyContin, and monitor all patients receiving  
4 OxyContin for the development of these  
5 behaviors and conditions. Risks are increased  
6 in patients with a personal or family history of  
7 substance abuse (including drug or alcohol  
8 abuse or addiction) or mental illness (e.g.,  
9 major depression). The potential for these risks  
10 should not, however, prevent the proper  
11 management of pain in any given patient.  
12 Patients at increased risk may be prescribed  
13 opioids such as OxyContin, but use in such  
14 patients necessitates intensive counseling  
15 about the risks and proper use of OxyContin  
16 along with intensive monitoring for signs of  
17 addiction, abuse, and misuse.

18 134. Additionally, on its current website, Purdue refers to publicly available tools that  
19 can assist with prescribing compliance, such as patient-prescriber agreements and risk  
20 assessments—however, the link to these documents appears to be no longer active.<sup>78</sup>

21 135. Purdue continues to downplay the severity of addiction and claims that  
22 dependence can easily be overcome by strategies such as adhering to a tapering schedule to  
23 successfully stop opioid treatment. On the current website for OxyContin, it instructs that  
24 “[w]hen discontinuing OxyContin, gradually taper the dosage. Do not abruptly discontinue  
25 OxyContin.”<sup>79</sup> And on the current OxyContin Medication Guide, Purdue also states that one  
26 should “taper the dosage gradually.”<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *ER/LA Opioid Analgesics REMS*, Purdue, <http://www.purduepharma.com/healthcare-professionals/responsible-use-of-opioids/remis/> (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).

<sup>79</sup> See *supra* note 77.

<sup>80</sup> *OxyContin Full Prescribing Information*, Purdue Pharma LP, <http://app.purduepharma.com/xmlpublishing/pi.aspx?id=o> (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).

1           136. In its “Dear Healthcare Professional” letter in 2010, Purdue instructed doctors to  
2 gradually taper someone off of OxyContin to prevent signs and symptoms of withdrawal in  
3 patients who were physically dependent.<sup>81</sup> Nowhere does Purdue warn doctors or patients that  
4 tapering may be inadequate to safely end opioid treatment and avoid addiction.

5           137. Endo also suggests that risk-mitigation strategies enable the safe prescription of  
6 opioids. In its currently active website, Opana.com, Endo states that assessment tools should be  
7 used to assess addiction risk, but that “[t]he potential for these risks should not, however, prevent  
8 proper management of pain in any given patient.”<sup>82</sup>

9           138. On the same website, Endo addresses tapering by stating “[w]hen discontinuing  
10 OPANA ER, gradually taper the dosage.”<sup>83</sup>

11           139. Janssen states on its currently active website, PrescribeResponsibly.com, that  
12 opioid addiction “can usually be managed” and that tools such as Opioid Agreements between  
13 patients and doctors can aid with this.<sup>84</sup>

14           140. Each Defendant’s statements about tapering misleadingly implied that gradual  
15 tapering would be sufficient to alleviate any risk of withdrawal or addiction while taking opioids.

16           141. As set forth in more detail below, these statements were false and misleading as  
17 evidenced by, *inter alia*, the findings made by the CDC in 2016.

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<sup>81</sup> See *supra* note 71.

25 <sup>82</sup> Opana ER, <http://www.opana.com> (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).

26 <sup>83</sup> *Id.*

<sup>84</sup> See *supra* note 74.

1           **4. Defendants falsely claimed doctors and patients could increase opioid usage**  
2           **indefinitely without added risk and failed to disclose risks associated with**  
3           **higher dosages.**

4           142. Defendants also made false and misleading statements regarding the volume of  
5           opioid use by patients, statements that were especially beneficial for Defendants' profits.

6           143. For example, in 2012, APF claimed on its website that there was no "ceiling  
7           dose" for opioids for chronic pain.<sup>85</sup> APF also made this claim in a guide sponsored by Purdue,  
8           which is still available online.

9           144. In a 1996 sales strategy memo from a Purdue regional manager, the manager  
10          emphasized that representatives should "convinc[e] the physician that there is no need" for  
11          prescribing OxyContin in shorter intervals than the recommended 12-hour interval, and instead  
12          the solution is prescribing higher doses. The manager directed representatives to discuss with  
13          physicians that there is "no[] upward limit" for dosing and ask "if there are any reservations in  
14          using a dose of 240mg-320mg of OxyContin."<sup>86</sup>

15          145. In fact, the 2003 Conversion Guide for OxyContin contained the following  
16          diagram for increasing dosage up to 320 mg:  
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<sup>85</sup> Noah Nesin, M.D., FAAFP, *Responsible Opioid Prescribing*, PCHC

25           [https://www.mainequalitycounts.org/image\\_upload/Keynote-](https://www.mainequalitycounts.org/image_upload/Keynote-%20Managing%20Chronic%20Pain%20and%20Opioids_Nesin.pdf)  
26           [%20Managing%20Chronic%20Pain%20and%20Opioids\\_Nesin.pdf](https://www.mainequalitycounts.org/image_upload/Keynote-%20Managing%20Chronic%20Pain%20and%20Opioids_Nesin.pdf) (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).

<sup>86</sup> *Sales manager on 12-hour dosing*, Los Angeles Times (May 5, 2016), [http://documents.latimes.com/sales-](http://documents.latimes.com/sales-manager-on12-hour-dosing-1996/)  
[manager-on12-hour-dosing-1996/](http://documents.latimes.com/sales-manager-on12-hour-dosing-1996/).

## A Guide to Titration of OxyContin®



146. Purdue's 2010 REMS for OxyContin also does not address concerns with increasing dosage, and instead advises prescribers that "dose adjustments may be made every 1-2 days"; "it is most appropriate to increase the q12h dose"; the "total daily dose can usually be increased by 25% to 50%"; and if "significant adverse reactions occur, treat them aggressively until they are under control, then resume upward titration."<sup>87</sup>

147. In a 2004 response letter to the FDA, Purdue tried to address concerns that patients who took OxyContin more frequently than 12 hours would be at more risk of side effects or adverse reactions. Purdue contended that the peak plasma concentrations of oxycodone would not increase with more frequent dosing, and therefore no adjustments to the package labeling or 12-hour dosing regimen were needed.<sup>88</sup> But these claims were false, and Purdue's suggestion that there was no upper limit or risk associated with increased dosage was incredibly misleading.

<sup>87</sup> See *supra* note 71.

<sup>88</sup> *Purdue Response to FDA, 2004*, Los Angeles Times (May 5, 2016), <http://documents.latimes.com/purdue-response-fda-2004/>.

1           148. Contrary to these claims of no upward limit of dosing, Purdue discontinued its  
2 160mg tablet in 2007 and stated that this step was taken “to reduce the risk of overdose  
3 accompanying the abuse of this dosage strength.”<sup>89</sup>

4           149. In addition, on March 2007, Dr. Gary Franklin—the Medical Director for the  
5 Washington State Department of Labor & Industries—published *Interagency Guideline on*  
6 *Opioid Dosing for Chronic Non-Cancer Pain*, a guideline developed in collaboration with  
7 actively practicing providers in Washington State with extensive experience in the evaluation  
8 and treatment of patients with chronic pain.

9           150. In response to this guideline, Purdue sent correspondence to Dr. Franklin  
10 specifically indicating, among other things, that “limiting access to opioids for persons with  
11 chronic pain is not the answer” and that the “safety and efficacy of OxyContin doses greater than  
12 40 mg every 12 hours in patients with chronic nonmalignant pain” was well established. Purdue  
13 even went so far as to represent to Dr. Franklin that even if opioid treatment produces significant  
14 adverse effects in a patient, “this does not preclude a trial of another opioid.”

15           151. Accordingly, Purdue continued to represent both publicly and privately that  
16 increased opioid usage was safe and did not present additional risk at higher doses.

17           152. Endo, on a website it sponsors, PainKnowledge.com, also made the claim in 2009  
18 that opioid dosages could be increased indefinitely.

19           153. In a publication titled “Understanding Your Pain: Taking Oral Opioid  
20 Analgesics,” Endo assures opioid users that concern about developing tolerance to the drugs’  
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25 <sup>89</sup> *OxyContin Tablets Risk Management Program*, Purdue Pharma L.P.,  
26 <https://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/DOCKETS/07p0232/07p-0232-cp00001-03-Exhibit-02-Part-1-vol1.pdf>  
(revised May 18, 2007).

pain-relieving effect is “not a problem,” and that “[t]he dose can be increased” and “[y]ou won’t ‘run out’ of pain relief.”<sup>90</sup>

The image shows two patient education brochures from Endo Pharmaceuticals. The left brochure is titled "Understanding Your Pain" and "Taking Oral Opioid Analgesics". It features a blue background with white text and several small photographs of diverse people. The right brochure is titled "How can I be sure I'm not addicted?" and "Constipation". It has a white background with blue and red text and a photograph of a doctor talking to a patient.

**Understanding Your Pain**

**Taking Oral Opioid Analgesics**

**How can I be sure I'm not addicted?**

- ◆ Addition to an opioid would mean that your pain has gone away but you still take the medicine regularly when you don't need it for pain, maybe just to escape from your problems.
- ◆ Ask yourself: Would I want to take this medicine if my pain went away? If you answer no, you are taking opioids for the right reasons—to relieve your pain and improve your function. You are not addicted.

**IF I TAKE THE OPIOID NOW, WILL IT WORK LATER WHEN I REALLY NEED IT?**

Some patients with chronic pain worry about this, but it is not a problem.

- ◆ The dose can be increased or other medicines can be added.
- ◆ You won't "run out" of pain relief.

**WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS?**

Talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about the side effects of opioids. If they

occur, remember that most opioid side effects can be treated or prevented.

**Constipation**

- ◆ Constipation from opioids is very common, but it can be prevented. If it does occur, it can be treated.
- ◆ Prevention is the best approach. If you take opioids daily, you need to eat more fiber and drink more liquids than you usually do. Many people also need to take a laxative. The most common type is a combination of stool softener and mild stimulant laxative. Those that can be purchased without a prescription include Peri-Colace® capsules or syrup and Senokat-S® tablets. Ask your pharmacist about less expensive generic forms.

**Nausea or vomiting (upset stomach)**

- ◆ This does not always occur, but if it does, it can be treated. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for medicine to relieve this. After a few days, the nausea usually stops.
- ◆ Try sitting still and breathing slowly through your mouth.
- ◆ Nausea medicines that you can buy without a prescription include Dramamine® tablets and Emetrol® oral solution.
- ◆ If your pain is under good control, you may be able to reduce the nausea by taking a lower dose of opioid.

**Drowsiness (sleepiness)**

- ◆ Some degree of sleepiness would be normal when you start taking an opioid, but after a few days the drowsiness usually goes away.

154. Janssen also discussed the disadvantages of dosage limits for other pain medicines in a 2009 patient education guide, but failed to address the risks of dosage increases with opioids.

155. As set forth in more detail below, these statements were false and misleading as evidenced by, *inter alia*, the findings made by the CDC in 2016.

**5. Defendants' deceptive marketing of the purported abuse-deterrent properties of their opioids has created false impressions that reformulated opioids can curb addiction and abuse.**

156. Defendants have also made and continue to make false and misleading statements about the purported abuse-deterrent properties of their opioid pills to suggest these reformulated

<sup>90</sup> *Understanding Your Pain: Taking Oral Opioid Analgesics*, Endo Pharmaceuticals (2004), [http://www.thblack.com/links/RSD/Understand\\_Pain\\_Opioid\\_Analgesics.pdf](http://www.thblack.com/links/RSD/Understand_Pain_Opioid_Analgesics.pdf).



1 pills are not susceptible to abuse. In so doing, Defendants have increased their profits by selling  
2 more pills for substantially higher prices.

3 157. For instance, since at least 2001, Purdue has contended that “abuse resistant  
4 products can reduce the incidence of abuse.”<sup>91</sup> Its current website touts abuse-deterrent  
5 properties by saying they “can make a difference.”<sup>92</sup>  
6

7 158. On August 17, 2015, Purdue announced the launch of a new website, “Team  
8 Against Opioid Abuse,” which it said was “designed to help healthcare professionals and  
9 laypeople alike learn about different abuse-deterrent technologies and how they can help in the  
10 reduction of misuse and abuse of opioids.”<sup>93</sup> This website appears to no longer be active.

11 159. A 2013 study which was authored by at least two doctors who at one time  
12 worked for Purdue stated that “[a]buse-deterrent formulations of opioid analgesics can reduce  
13 abuse.”<sup>94</sup> In another study from 2016 with at least one Purdue doctor as an author, the authors  
14 claimed that abuse decreased by as much as 99% in some situations after abuse-deterrent  
15 formulations were introduced.<sup>95</sup>  
16  
17  
18  
19

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20 <sup>91</sup> See *supra* note 52.

21 <sup>92</sup> *Opioids with Abuse-Deterrent Properties*, Purdue, [http://www.purduepharma.com/healthcare-  
22 professionals/responsible-use-of-opioids/opioids-with-abuse-deterrent-properties/](http://www.purduepharma.com/healthcare-professionals/responsible-use-of-opioids/opioids-with-abuse-deterrent-properties/) (last visited Sept. 7, 2017).

23 <sup>93</sup> *Purdue Pharma L.P. Launches TeamAgainstOpioidAbuse.com*, Purdue (Aug. 17, 2015),  
<http://www.purduepharma.com/news-media/2015/08/purdue-pharma-l-p-launches-teamagainstopioidabuse-com/>.

24 <sup>94</sup> Paul M. Coplan, Hrishikesh Kale, Lauren Sandstrom, Craig Landau, and Howard D. Chilcoat, *Changes in  
25 oxycodone and heroin exposures in the National Poison Data System after introduction of extended-release  
26 oxycodone with abuse-deterrent characteristics*, 22 (12) *Parmacoepidemiol Drug Saf.* 1274-82 (Sept. 30, 2013),  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4283730/>.

<sup>95</sup> Paul M. Coplan, Howard D. Chilcoat, Stephen Butler, Edward M. Sellers, Aditi Kadakia, Venkatesh  
Harikrishnan, J. David Haddox, and Richard C. Dart, *The effect of an abuse-deterrent opioid formulation  
(OxyContin) on opioid abuse-related outcomes in the postmarketing setting*, 100 *Clin. Pharmacol. Ther.*, 275-86  
(June 22, 2016), <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cpt.390/full>.



1 160. Interestingly, one report found that the original safety label for OxyContin, which  
2 instructed patients not to crush the tablets because it would have a rapid release effect, may have  
3 inadvertently given opioid users ideas for techniques to get high from these drugs.<sup>96</sup>

4 161. In 2012, Defendant Endo replaced the formula for Opana ER with a new formula  
5 with abuse-deterrent properties that it claimed would make Opana ER resistant to manipulation  
6 from users to snort or inject it. Despite the FDA determining that the data did not back up claims  
7 that the new formula could reduce abuse, Endo advertised its reformulated pills as “crush  
8 resistant” and directed its sales representatives to represent the same to doctors. In 2016, Endo  
9 reached an agreement with the Attorney General of the State of New York that required Endo to  
10 discontinue making such statements.<sup>97</sup>

11 162. Defendants’ assertions that their reformulated pills could curb abuse were false  
12 and misleading, as the CDC’s 2016 Guidelines, discussed below, confirm.

13  
14  
15 **6. Defendants falsely claimed that long-term opioid use improved patients’**  
16 **function and quality of life.**

17 163. Not only did Defendants falsely claim there were minimal or no harms associated  
18 with opioid use, Defendants represented that there was a significant upside to long-term opioid  
19 use, including that opioids could restore function.<sup>98</sup>

20 164. For example, Purdue sponsored the development and distribution of an APF guide  
21 in 2011 which claimed that “multiple clinical studies have shown that opioids are effective in  
22

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23 <sup>96</sup> See *supra* note 58.

24 <sup>97</sup> Press Release, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman, *A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement with Endo*  
25 *Health Solutions Inc. & Endo Pharmaceuticals Inc. Over Marketing of Prescription Opioid Drugs* (Mar. 3, 2016),  
<https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-settlement-endo-health-solutions-inc-endo-pharmaceuticals>.

26 <sup>98</sup> This case *does not* request or require the Court to specifically adjudicate whether opioids are appropriate for the  
treatment of chronic, non-cancer-pain—though the scientific evidence strongly suggests they are not.

1 improving daily function, psychological health, and health-related quality of life for chronic pain  
2 patients.” This guide is still available today.

3 165. Purdue also ran a series of advertisements of OxyContin in 2012 in medical  
4 journals titled “Pain vignettes,” which were styled as case studies of patients with persistent pain  
5 conditions and for whom OxyContin was recommended to improve their function.  
6

7 166. Purdue and Endo also sponsored and distributed a book in 2007 to promote the  
8 claim that pain relief from opioids, by itself, improved patients’ function. The book remains for  
9 sale online today.

10 167. Endo’s advertisements for Opana ER claimed that use of the drug for chronic pain  
11 allowed patients to perform demanding tasks like construction and portrayed Opana ER users as  
12 healthy and unimpaired.  
13

14 168. Endo’s NIPC website also claimed in 2009 that with opioids, “your level of  
15 function should improve; you may find you are now able to participate in activities of daily  
16 living, such as work and hobbies, that you were not able to enjoy when your pain was worse.”

17 169. Endo further sponsored a series of CME programs through NIPC which claimed  
18 that chronic opioid therapy has been “shown to reduce pain and depressive symptoms and  
19 cognitive functioning.”  
20

21 170. Through PainKnowledge.org, Endo also supported and sponsored guidelines that  
22 stated, among other things, that “Opioid Medications are a powerful and often highly effective  
23 tool in treating pain,” and that “they can help restore comfort, function, and quality of life.”<sup>99</sup>  
24

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25 <sup>99</sup>*Informed Consent for Using Opioids to Treat Pain*, Painknowledge.org (2007),  
26 [https://www.mainequalitycounts.org/image\\_upload/Opioid%20Informed%20Consent%20Formatted\\_1\\_23\\_2008.p  
df.](https://www.mainequalitycounts.org/image_upload/Opioid%20Informed%20Consent%20Formatted_1_23_2008.pdf)

1           171. In addition, Janssen sponsored and edited patient guides which stated that  
2 “opioids may make it easier for people to live normally.” The guides listed expected functional  
3 improvements from opioid use, including sleeping through the night, and returning to work,  
4 recreation, sex, walking, and climbing stairs.

5           172. Janssen also sponsored, funded, and edited a website which featured an interview  
6 edited by Janssen that described how opioids allowed a patient to “continue to function.” This  
7 video is still available today.

8           173. Furthermore, sales representatives for Purdue, Endo, and Janssen communicated  
9 and continue to communicate the message that opioids will improve patients’ function, without  
10 appropriate disclaimers.

11           174. Defendants’ statements regarding opioids’ ability to improve function and quality  
12 of life are false and misleading. As the CDC’s 2016 Guidelines confirm, not a single study  
13 supports these claims.  
14

15  
16 **C. The 2016 CDC Guidelines and other recent studies confirm that Defendants’**  
17 **statements about the risks and benefits of opioids are patently false.**

18           175. Contrary to the statements made by Defendants in their well-orchestrated  
19 campaign to tout the benefits of opioids and downplay their risks, recent studies confirm  
20 Defendants’ statements were false and misleading.

21           176. The CDC issued its *Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain* on March  
22 15, 2016 (the “2016 CDC Guideline” or “Guideline”).<sup>100</sup> The 2016 CDC Guideline, approved by  
23 the FDA, “provides recommendations for primary care clinicians who are prescribing opioids for  
24

25  
26 <sup>100</sup> See *supra* note 3.

1 chronic pain outside of active cancer treatment, palliative care, and end-of-life care.” The  
2 Guideline also assesses the risks and harms associated with opioid use.

3 177. The 2016 CDC Guideline was issued after the CDC “obtained input from experts,  
4 stakeholders, the public, peer reviewers, and a federally chartered advisory committee.” The  
5 recommendations in the 2016 CDC Guideline were further made “on the basis of a systematic  
6 review of the best available evidence . . .”

7  
8 178. With respect to the expert opinions obtained by the CDC for the Guideline, the  
9 CDC went through an extensive and detailed process to solicit these opinions. For instance, the  
10 Guideline indicates as follows:

11 CDC sought the input of experts to assist in reviewing the evidence and providing  
12 perspective on how CDC used the evidence to develop the draft recommendations. These  
13 experts, referred to as the “Core Expert Group” (CEG) included subject matter experts,  
14 representatives of primary care professional societies and state agencies, and an expert in  
15 guideline development methodology. CDC identified subject matter experts with high  
16 scientific standing; appropriate academic and clinical training and relevant clinical  
17 experience; and proven scientific excellence in opioid prescribing, substance use disorder  
18 treatment, and pain management. CDC identified representatives from leading primary  
19 care professional organizations to represent the audience for this guideline. Finally, CDC  
20 identified state agency officials and representatives based on their experience with state  
21 guidelines for opioid prescribing that were developed with multiple agency stakeholders  
22 and informed by scientific literature and existing evidence-based guidelines.

23 179. The 2016 Guideline was also peer-reviewed pursuant to “the final information  
24 quality bulletin for peer review.” In particular, the Guideline indicates:

25 [P]eer review requirements applied to this guideline because it provides influential  
26 scientific information that could have a clear and substantial impact on public- and  
private-sector decisions. Three experts independently reviewed the guideline to determine  
the reasonableness and strength of recommendations; the clarity with which scientific  
uncertainties were clearly identified; and the rationale, importance, clarity, and ease of  
implementation of the recommendations. CDC selected peer reviewers based on  
expertise, diversity of scientific viewpoints, and independence from the guideline  
development process. CDC assessed and managed potential conflicts of interest using a  
process similar to the one as described for solicitation of expert opinion. No financial  
interests were identified in the disclosure and review process, and nonfinancial activities

1 were determined to be of minimal risk; thus, no significant conflict of interest concerns  
2 were identified.

3 180. Accordingly, there is no doubt that the 2016 CDC Guideline is the result of a  
4 thorough and extensive process by the CDC.

5 181. The findings in the 2016 CDC Guideline both confirmed the existing body of  
6 scientific evidence regarding the questionable efficacy of opioid use and contradicted  
7 Defendants' statements about opioids.

8 182. For instance, the Guideline states "[e]xtensive evidence shows the possible harms  
9 of opioids (including opioid use disorder, overdose, and motor vehicle injury)" and that "[o]pioid  
10 pain medication use presents serious risks, including overdose and opioid use disorder." The  
11 Guideline further confirms there are significant symptoms related to opioid withdrawal,  
12 including drug cravings, anxiety, insomnia, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, sweating,  
13 tremor, tachycardia (rapid heartbeat), spontaneous abortion and premature labor in pregnant  
14 women, and the unmasking of anxiety, depression, and addiction. These findings contradict  
15 statements made by Defendants regarding the minimal risks associated with opioid use,  
16 including that the risk of addiction from opioid use is low.

17 183. The Guideline also alarmingly states that there is "[n]o evidence" to show "a  
18 long-term benefit of opioids in pain and function versus no opioids for chronic pain . . ."  
19 Furthermore, the Guideline indicates that "continuing opioid therapy for 3 months substantially  
20 increases the risk of opioid use disorder." Indeed, the Guideline also indicates that "[p]atients  
21 who do not experience clinically meaningful pain relief early in treatment . . . are unlikely to  
22 experience pain relief with longer-term use," and that physicians should "reassess[] pain and  
23 function within 1 month" in order to decide whether to "minimize risks of long-term opioid use  
24  
25  
26

1 by discontinuing opioids” because the patient is “not receiving a clear benefit.” These findings  
2 flatly contradict claims made by Defendants that there are minimal or no adverse impacts of  
3 long-term opioid use, or that long-term opioid use could actually improve or restore a patient’s  
4 function.

5 184. In support of these statements about the lack of long-term benefits of opioid use,  
6 the CDC concluded that “[a]lthough opioids can reduce pain during short-term use, the clinical  
7 evidence review found insufficient evidence to determine whether pain relief is sustained and  
8 whether function or quality of life improves with long-term opioid therapy.” The CDC further  
9 found that “evidence is limited or insufficient for improved pain or function with long-term use  
10 of opioids for several chronic pain conditions for which opioids are commonly prescribed, such  
11 as low back pain, headache, and fibromyalgia.”  
12

13 185. With respect to opioid dosing, the Guideline reports that “[b]enefits of high-dose  
14 opioids for chronic pain are not established” while the “risks for serious harms related to opioid  
15 therapy increase at higher opioid dosage.” The CDC specifically explains that “there is now an  
16 established body of scientific evidence showing that overdose risk is increased at higher opioid  
17 dosages.” The CDC also states that there is an “increased risk[] for opioid use disorder,  
18 respiratory depression, and death at higher dosages.” As a result, the CDC advises doctors to  
19 “avoid increasing dosage” above 90 morphine milligram equivalents per day. These findings  
20 contradict statements made by Defendants that increasing dosage is safe and that under-treatment  
21 is the cause for certain patients’ aberrant behavior.  
22

23 186. The 2016 CDC Guideline also contradicts statements made by the Defendants that  
24 there are reliable risk-mitigation tactics to reduce the risk of addiction. For instance, the  
25 Guideline indicates that available risk screening tools “show insufficient accuracy for  
26

1 classification of patients as at low or high risk for [opioid] abuse or misuse” and counsels that  
2 doctors “should not overestimate the ability of these tools to rule out risks from long-term opioid  
3 therapy.”

4 187. Finally, the 2016 CDC Guideline states that “[n]o studies” support the notion that  
5 “abuse-deterrent technologies [are] a risk mitigation strategy for deterring or preventing abuse,”  
6 noting that the technologies—even when they work—“do not prevent opioid abuse through oral  
7 intake, the most common route of opioid abuse, and can still be abused by nonoral routes.” In  
8 particular, the CDC found as follows:

10 The “abuse-deterrent” label does not indicate that there is no risk for abuse. No studies  
11 were found in the clinical evidence review assessing the effectiveness of abuse-deterrent  
12 technologies as a risk mitigation strategy for deterring or preventing abuse. In addition,  
13 abuse-deterrent technologies do not prevent unintentional overdose through oral intake.  
Experts agreed that recommendations could not be offered at this time related to use of  
abuse-deterrent formulations.

14 Accordingly, the CDC’s findings regarding “abuse-deterrent technologies” directly contradict  
15 Purdue and Endo’s claims that their new pills deter or prevent abuse.

16 188. Notably, in addition to the findings made by the CDC last year, the Washington  
17 State Agency Medical Directors’ Group (“AMDG”)—a collaboration among several Washington  
18 State Agencies—published its *Interagency Guideline on Prescribing Opioids for Pain* in 2015.  
19 The AMDG came to many of the same conclusions as the CDC did. For example, the AMDG  
20 found that “there is little evidence to support long term efficacy of [chronic opioid analgesic  
21 therapy, or “COAT”] in improving function and pain, [but] there is ample evidence of its risk for  
22 harm . . . .”<sup>101</sup>  
23

24  
25  
26 <sup>101</sup> *Interagency Guideline on Prescribing Opioids for Pain*, Agency Medical Directors’ Group (June 2015),  
<http://www.agencymeddirectors.wa.gov/Files/2015AMDGOpioidGuideline.pdf>.

189. In addition, as discussed above, in contrast to Defendants’ statements that the 1980 NEJM letter provided evidence of the low risk of opioid addiction in patients treated for pain, the NEJM recently published a letter largely debunking the use of the 1980 letter as evidence for such a claim.<sup>102</sup> The researchers demonstrated how the 1980 letter was irresponsibly cited and, in some cases, “grossly misrepresented,” when in fact it did not provide evidence supporting the broad claim of low addiction risk for all patients prescribed opioids for pain. As noted above, the 1980 letter’s authors reviewed only files of patients administered opioids in a hospital setting, rather than patients sent home with a prescription for opioids to treat chronic pain.

190. The authors of the 2017 letter described their methodology as follows:

We performed a bibliometric analysis of this [1980] correspondence from its publication until March 30, 2017. For each citation, two reviewers independently evaluated the portrayal of the article’s conclusions, using an adaptation of an established taxonomy of citation behavior along with other aspects of generalizability . . . For context, we also ascertained the number of citations of other stand-alone letters that were published in nine contemporaneous issues of the *Journal* (in the index issue and in the four issues that preceded and followed it).

We identified 608 citations of the index publication and noted a sizable increase after the introduction of OxyContin (a long-acting formulation of oxycodone) in 1995 . . . **Of the articles that included a reference to the 1980 letter, the authors of 439 (72.2%) cited it as evidence that addiction was rare in patients treated with opioids. Of the 608 articles, the authors of 491 articles (80.8%) did not note that the patients who were described in the letter were hospitalized at the time they received the prescription, whereas some authors grossly misrepresented the conclusions of the letter . . .** Of note, affirmational citations have become much less common in recent years. In contrast to the 1980 correspondence, 11 stand-alone letters that were published contemporaneously by the *Journal* were cited a median of 11 times.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> See *supra* note 7.

<sup>103</sup> *Id.* (emphasis added).



191. The researchers provided examples of quotes from articles citing the 1980 letter, and noted several shortcomings and inaccuracies with the quotations. For instance, the researchers concluded that these quotations (i) “overstate[] conclusions of the index publication,” (ii) do[] not accurately specify its study population,” and (iii) did not adequately address “[l]imitations to generalizability.”<sup>104</sup>

Quote	Reference	Comment
"This pain population with no abuse history is literally at no risk for addiction."	Kowal N. What is the issue?: pseudoaddiction or undertreatment of pain. <i>Nurs Econ</i> 1998;17(6):348-9	
"In truth, however, the medical evidence overwhelmingly indicates that properly administered opioid therapy rarely if ever results in "accidental addiction" or "opioid abuse"."	Libby RT. Treating Doctors as Drug Dealers: The Drug Enforcement Administration's War on Prescription Painkillers. <i>The Independent Review</i> 2006;10(4):511-545.	
"Fear of addiction may lead to reluctance by the physician to prescribe. [...] However, there is no evidence that this occurs when prescribing opioids for pain."	Iles S, Catterall JR, Hanks G. Use of opioid analgesics in a patient with chronic abdominal pain. <i>Int J Clin Pract</i> 2002;56(3):227-8.	
"In reality, medical opioid addiction is very rare. In Porter and Jick's study on patients treated with narcotics, only four of the 11,882 cases showed psychological dependency."	Liu W, Xie S, Yue L, et al. Investigation and analysis of oncologists' knowledge of morphine usage in cancer pain treatment. <i>Onco Targets Ther</i> 2014;7:729-37.	Overstates conclusions of the index publication does not accurately specify its study population. Limitations to generalizability are not otherwise explicitly mentioned.
"Physicians are frequently concerned about the potential for addiction when prescribing opiates; however, there have been studies suggesting that addiction rarely evolves in the setting of painful conditions."	Curtis LA, Morrell TD, Todd KH. Pain Management in the Emergency Department 2006;8(7).	
"Although medicine generally regards anecdotal information with disdain (rigorously controlled double-blind clinical trials are the "gold standard"), solid data on the low risk of addiction to opioid analgesics and the manageability of adverse side effects have been ignored or discounted in favor of the anecdotal, the scientifically unsupported, and the clearly fallacious."	Rich BA. Prioritizing pain management in patient care. Has the time come for a new approach. <i>Postgrad Med</i> 2001;110(3):15-7.	
"The Boston Drug Surveillance Program reviewed the charts of nearly 12,000 cancer pain patients treated over a decade and found only four of them could be labeled as addicts."	Levy MH. Pharmacologic management of cancer pain. <i>Semin Oncol</i> 1994;21(6):718-39.	Incorrectly identifies the index study population as cancer patients; does not otherwise address limitations to generalizability.

<sup>104</sup> Supplementary Appendix to Pamela T.M. Leung, B.Sc. Pharm., Erin M. Macdonald, M.Sc., Matthew B. Stanbrook, M.D., Ph.D., Irfan Al Dhallal, M.D., David N. Juurlink, M.D., Ph.D., *A 1980 Letter on the Risk of Opioid Addiction*, 376 N Engl J Med 2194-95 (June 1, 2017), [http://www.nejm.org/doi/suppl/10.1056/NEJMc1700150/suppl\\_file/nejmc1700150\\_appendix.pdf](http://www.nejm.org/doi/suppl/10.1056/NEJMc1700150/suppl_file/nejmc1700150_appendix.pdf).

1 192. Based on this review, the researchers concluded as follows:

2 [W]e found that a five-sentence letter published in the Journal in 1980 was heavily and  
3 uncritically cited as evidence that addiction was rare with long-term opioid therapy. We  
4 believe that this citation pattern contributed to the North American opioid crisis by  
5 helping to shape a narrative that allayed prescribers' concerns about the risk of addiction  
6 associated with long-term opioid therapy. In 2007, the manufacturer of OxyContin and  
7 three senior executives pleaded guilty to federal criminal charges that they misled  
8 regulators, doctors, and patients about the risk of addiction associated with the drug. Our  
9 findings highlight the potential consequences of inaccurate citation and underscore the  
10 need for diligence when citing previously published studies.<sup>105</sup>

11 193. These researchers' careful analysis demonstrates the falsity of Defendants' claim  
12 that this 1980 letter was evidence of a low risk of addiction in opioid-treated patients. By casting  
13 this letter as evidence of low risk of addiction, Defendants played fast and loose with the truth,  
14 with blatant disregard for the consequences of their misrepresentations.

15 **D. Defendants have made these false and misleading statements to people, including**  
16 **physicians, in Tacoma.**

17 194. There is no dispute that Defendants have made specific misrepresentations to  
18 people in Tacoma, including to family doctors and physicians responsible for treating pain.  
19 Further, as a result of Defendants' aggressive and deceptive marketing scheme, doctors in  
20 Tacoma have undoubtedly prescribed a high number of opioids to Tacoma citizens.

21 195. For example, a family medicine doctor who owned and operated four clinics in  
22 the Tacoma area was sentenced to several years in prison for prescribing tens of thousands of  
23 opioid prescriptions to patients without even examining them.

24 196. According to testimony and evidence introduced at the trial of this family  
25 medicine doctor, Dr. Antoine Johnson, the clinics he operated churned out prescriptions for  
26 Schedule II controlled substances such as oxycodone to thousands of patients. These

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<sup>105</sup> See *supra* note 7.

1 prescriptions were refilled for months and years at a time. Often, the patients would come to the  
2 clinics, get their weight and blood pressure taken by a nursing assistant, then pick up a Schedule  
3 II prescription that had been pre-signed by Dr. Johnson.

4 197. The Special Agent in charge of the investigation indicated that the pills Dr.  
5 Johnson prescribed caused “great harm” to the communities he purported to serve, and that he  
6 and the prescribed opioids “turned patients into addicts and facilitated others in drug dealing.”<sup>106</sup>  
7

8 198. While the City does not allege the Defendants are directly responsible for Dr.  
9 Johnson’s actions, the doctor’s “pill mill” establishes that Defendants knew or should have  
10 known that their opioids were being used for improper uses in Tacoma, given the precision with  
11 which they track doctors’ prescription volumes. Defendants nonetheless turned a blind eye, as  
12 “pill mills” such as Dr. Johnson’s generated significant profits for them. Although Dr. Johnson’s  
13 actions were his own, Defendants have the ability to shut down such “pill mills” or take action to  
14 mitigate the wide proliferation of these “pill mills” because they control the product supply, and  
15 as discussed above, keep close watch on doctors’ prescribing patterns through their analysis of  
16 IMS data.  
17

18 199. Furthermore, many family doctors in Tacoma have been specific targets of  
19 Defendants’ marketing tactics. Defendants sent sales representatives to various Tacoma-area  
20 doctors over a significant period of time to tout the benefits and lack of risks associated with  
21 opioids, including making repeated assertions to these doctors that their claims were evidence-  
22  
23  
24

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25 <sup>106</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office, *South Sound Doctor Sentenced to More Than 12 Years in Prison for Health Care Fraud,*  
26 *Tax Crimes, and Drug Distribution*, Federal Bureau of Investigation (Mar. 29, 2012),  
[https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/seattle/press-releases/2012/south-sound-doctor-sentenced-to-more-than-12-years-  
in-prison-for-health-care-fraud-tax-crimes-and-drug-distribution](https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/seattle/press-releases/2012/south-sound-doctor-sentenced-to-more-than-12-years-in-prison-for-health-care-fraud-tax-crimes-and-drug-distribution).

1 based and well researched. Defendants knew these family doctors relied on their claims and had  
2 minimal time or resources to investigate them independently.

3         200. In addition, it is not surprising that Tacoma doctors are prescribing significant  
4 amounts of opioids to their patients, because Defendants have made considerable payments to  
5 doctors in Tacoma promoting these drugs. For example, according to public records, between  
6 2010 and 2013, Defendant Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. paid Tacoma-based doctors over  
7 \$44,000 to promote their drugs, including the opioids Nucynta and Nucynta ER.  
8

9 **E. Defendants have reaped unprecedented profits from the sale of opioids.**

10         201. Defendants have reaped enormous profits from the addiction crisis they spawned.  
11 In 2014 alone, opioids generated \$11 billion in revenue for pharmaceutical drug companies like  
12 Defendants.  
13

14         202. In fact, Purdue has generated estimated sales of more than \$35 billion from  
15 opioids since 1996, while raking in more than \$3 billion in 2015. Purdue is 100% privately  
16 owned by a single family, the Sacklers, whose net worth was \$14 billion as of 2015. All nine  
17 members of the Purdue board are family members, and all of the company's profits go to Sackler  
18 family trusts and entities.<sup>107</sup> The Sacklers are one of the wealthiest families in America,  
19 surpassing the wealth of storied families like the Rockefellers, the Mellons, and the Busches.<sup>108</sup>  
20

21         203. Purdue's annual opioid sales of \$3 billion in 2015 represent a four-fold increase  
22 from its 2006 sales of \$800 million.  
23

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24 <sup>107</sup> David Armstrong, *The man at the center of the secret OxyContin files*, Stat News (May 12, 2016),  
25 <https://www.statnews.com/2016/05/12/man-center-secret-oxycontin-files/>.

26 <sup>108</sup> Alex Morrell, *The OxyContin Clan: The \$14 Billion Newcomer to Forbes 2015 List of Richest U.S. Families*,  
Forbes (July 1, 2015), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexmorrell/2015/07/01/the-oxycontin-clan-the-14-billion-newcomer-to-forbes-2015-list-of-richest-u-s-families/#382ab3275e02>.

1           204. Endo has also profited massively from the sale of opioids. Opioids accounted for  
2 more than \$400 million of Endo's overall revenues of \$3 billion in 2012, and Opana ER alone  
3 generated more than \$1 billion in revenue for Endo in 2010 and again in 2013.

4           205. Janssen also generates substantial sales from its opioids. For example, Duragesic  
5 accounted for more than \$1 billion in sales in 2009, and Nucynta and Nucynta ER accounted for  
6 \$172 million in sales in 2014.

7  
8 **F. Tacoma has been significantly harmed as a result of Defendants' conduct.**

9           206. As a result of Defendants' misrepresentations and deceptive statements about  
10 prescription opioids, Tacoma has suffered significant and ongoing harms.

11 **1. Defendants' conduct has dramatically increased Tacoma's health care costs.**

12           207. Defendants' misrepresentations regarding the purported safety and efficacy of  
13 opioids have substantially increased the City's health care costs. The City of Tacoma provides  
14 health insurance to its employees and their beneficiaries. The City is self-insured and has  
15 administrative services-only agreements with two different insurers. This means that when  
16 anyone covered by the City's health insurance program visits a doctor or fills a prescription or  
17 otherwise incurs covered health-related costs, the City of Tacoma pays a substantial portion of  
18 those costs directly.

19  
20           208. The City of Tacoma provides health insurance to over 9,000 people, and in  
21 connection with this coverage, the City has spent significant amounts of money on prescription  
22 opioids. For example, between 2015 and 2016 alone, the City spent well over \$1,000,000 on  
23 prescriptions for opioids, including those manufactured by Defendants. The bulk of these opioids  
24 were prescribed for use in treating chronic pain, for which opioids should not be used. Thus,  
25 Tacoma should never have had to pay for these drugs.  
26

1           209. Of course, the direct costs of filling the opioid prescriptions is just a small part of  
2 the total cost to the City for prescriptions of opioids. Tacoma has paid significant amounts of  
3 money for doctors' visits, lab work, and other costs related to the prescription of opioid  
4 painkillers. Had Defendants told the truth about the risks and benefits of opioids, the City of  
5 Tacoma would not have had to pay for these drugs or the costs related to their prescription.  
6

7           210. Even those costs, however, represent just the tip of the iceberg of opioid-related  
8 costs that Tacoma directly pays. Some people covered by the City's health insurance program  
9 have become addicted to opioids. As a result, the City of Tacoma has also incurred significant  
10 health care costs related to treating those opioid addictions. Had Defendants told the truth about  
11 the dangers of opioids, the City of Tacoma would not have to cover the costs of addiction  
12 treatment.  
13

14           211. Even for those people covered by the City who do not get addicted, improperly  
15 prescribed opioids carry other costs for the City. For example, when patients receive opioid  
16 prescriptions, they often fail to take other steps to address the root causes of their chronic pain.  
17 Thus, even if patients are able to wean themselves off of opioids, the underlying conditions often  
18 remain, and may have become worse or more difficult and expensive to treat.  
19

20           212. Across the United States, people who are prescribed opioid painkillers cost health  
21 insurers approximately \$16,000 more than those who do not have such prescriptions. Those  
22 costs, including those borne by the City of Tacoma, clearly would have been avoided had  
23 Defendants not hidden the truth about the risks and benefits of opioids.

24           213. The City has also shouldered significant health-related costs outside of its health  
25 insurance program as a result of Defendants' actions. For instance, when City employees are  
26 prescribed opioid painkillers for chronic pain they often are forced to miss work, because the

1 drugs' effects interfere with the ability to work. Since opioid prescriptions fail to treat the cause  
2 of the pain, the employees often continue to miss work due to the ongoing problems. In fact,  
3 recent studies suggest that opioids actually slow recovery times, keeping employees out of work  
4 longer than they would have been had they not taken these unnecessary pharmaceuticals. If those  
5 employees become addicted to the opioids, they are likely to miss even more work. Because of  
6 Defendants' misstatements, the City's employees have had losses in work time, which results in  
7 substantial losses to the City.  
8

9 **2. Defendants' conduct has significantly increased the City's workers'**  
10 **compensation costs.**

11 214. The City of Tacoma administers its own workers' compensation program. When  
12 someone working for the City is injured on the job, the City pays, among other things, that  
13 person's health care costs.

14 215. Under Tacoma's workers' compensation program, the City has spent significant  
15 money filling opioid prescriptions.

16 216. The vast majority, if not all, of these prescriptions were unnecessary, as the  
17 injuries are typically back strains, and other injuries that should be treated with physical therapy,  
18 lidocaine patches, and other non-opioid therapies. Thus, Tacoma should never have had to pay  
19 for these drugs.  
20

21 217. Consistent with Tacoma's costs in providing health coverage to its employees as  
22 set forth above, the direct costs of filling the opioid prescriptions is just a small part of the total  
23 cost to the City for prescriptions of opioids. Under its workers' compensation plan, Tacoma pays  
24 for doctors' visits, lab work, and other costs related to the prescription of opioid painkillers. Had  
25  
26

1 Defendants told the truth about the risks and benefits of opioids, the City of Tacoma would not  
2 have had to pay for these drugs or the costs related to their prescription.

3 218. Not only are opioids inappropriate for treating the vast bulk of the people making  
4 workers' compensation claims, the use of opioids often actually slows the recovery process. This  
5 means that the injured worker is off the job longer, and the City shoulders larger workers'  
6 compensation costs.  
7

8 **3. Tacoma has spent significant sums of money providing human services to the**  
9 **community as a result of the epidemic Defendants have created.**

10 219. The impact of the opioid epidemic on Tacoma goes well beyond its direct  
11 healthcare and employment costs. The effects of the epidemic reach across the City, imposing  
12 human and financial costs at all levels.

13 220. For example, the City of Tacoma spends significant resources helping its  
14 homeless population by directly providing key services or funding programs run by charitable  
15 organizations. Such human services include providing housing, shelters, and mental health  
16 counseling, among many others.  
17

18 221. Over the past decade, the homeless population in Tacoma has grown at an  
19 astonishing rate. The homeless crisis has become such a tragic problem that in May 2017, Mayor  
20 Marilyn Strickland declared a state of emergency for homelessness in Tacoma.

21 222. While there may be several reasons for the rise in the homeless population in  
22 Tacoma, the increase is undoubtedly caused in part by the opioid epidemic, as people addicted to  
23 opioids often find it difficult to hold down jobs, which ultimately pushes them on to the street  
24 and places a huge burden onto the City. Providing the homeless population in Tacoma with  
25  
26



1 shelter, treatment, and other services is an expensive undertaking, made dramatically more so  
2 now that the homeless population has grown and is comprised of a large number of addicts.

3       223. Because many people who become addicted to opioids are originally exposed to  
4 these addictive drugs through legitimate prescriptions, the opioid crisis has ensnared a broader  
5 cross-section of the population than previous drug epidemics. People who would not otherwise  
6 have encountered street drugs like heroin and opium get hooked on their dangerous cousins,  
7 prescription opioids. This has expanded the population of people who are drug addicts in  
8 Tacoma. For these people, a valid prescription for opioids was the first step to addiction and drug  
9 abuse, which ultimately led them to lose their homes, and often, their families and friends. Some  
10 young people living on the streets of Tacoma today ran away from homes that had fallen apart  
11 because a parent had become addicted to opioids.  
12

13       224. Prescription opioids have not only helped to fuel the homeless crisis, but have  
14 made it immeasurably more difficult for the City to address. Mental health services, for example,  
15 are critical for many in the homeless population. Unfortunately, opioid use and addiction can  
16 make it more difficult to provide effective mental health treatment. Those who need help most  
17 often turn to opioids—legal or not—to self-medicate and avoid getting treatment and care that  
18 might lead to long-term success and more positive outcomes.  
19

20       225. As a result of a recent survey, the City estimated that at least fifty percent of its  
21 homeless population is addicted to opioids. Whether opioid addiction caused these people to lose  
22 their homes or not, opioid addictions now prevent countless numbers of people from finding a  
23 way out of homelessness.  
24  
25  
26

1           226. Because opioid addition is highly prevalent in Tacoma, the City has had to invest  
2 significant resources in addiction programs and other human services, which are widely used by  
3 all residents of Tacoma, whether homeless or not.

4           227. For instance, individuals in Tacoma's Chemical Dependency Program reported  
5 that they became addicted to opioids and began buying them on the street after they ran out of  
6 doctor-prescribed opioids. Some of these individuals acknowledged that they needed to use the  
7 pills on a daily basis, would drive high on pills, and ultimately had their lives ruined as a result  
8 of taking opioids. In fact, 30 adolescents and 60 adults reported opioid abuse in their assessments  
9 to Tacoma's Chemical Dependency Program in 2016 alone.

11           228. The City is also investing heavily in prevention work, running programs at local  
12 high schools and sponsoring events aimed at teaching people how to avoid becoming addicted to  
13 opioids and how to help friends and family do the same.

14           229. In order to fund much of this opioid-related work, the City has implemented a  
15 new tax, aimed at raising approximately \$10 million per biennium. The City has budgeted these  
16 dollars to be allocated to various agencies and programs addressing homelessness, including  
17 significant sums on shelters for families, behavioral health support services, mental health  
18 centers, and educational outreach, all of which directly or indirectly address many of the  
19 consequences of the opioid epidemic in Tacoma.

21           **4. Tacoma has incurred serious costs responding to opioid-related health**  
22           **emergencies.**

23           230. The City of Tacoma has also borne enormous costs responding to opioid-related  
24 health emergencies.

1           231. The Tacoma Fire Department provides emergency medical services in the City of  
2 Tacoma. The Fire Department responds to emergency calls, dispatching emergency medical  
3 service personnel, including emergency medical technicians, or EMTs, in ambulances or fire  
4 trucks.

5           232. Although providing emergency medical services is exceedingly expensive, it is  
6 one of the most critical services the City provides its citizens. The Fire Department is the front-  
7 line responder for a wide range of medical emergencies, from heart attacks and strokes to mental  
8 health emergencies and drug overdoses.

9           233. Over the past decade, the number of opioid-related emergency calls to which the  
10 Fire Department has responded has risen sharply. For example, in 2013, Tacoma Fire  
11 Department administered 102 doses of naloxone—a powerful medicine, also known as Narcan,  
12 that can reverse an opioid overdose—on emergency calls. By 2016, the number of naloxone  
13 doses the Fire Department administered to people who had overdosed on an opioid had jumped  
14 50% to 153 doses.

15           234. Responding to opioid overdoses is expensive; it involves sending ambulances,  
16 engines, and specially-trained staff to the emergency. People who have overdosed on opioids  
17 typically require at least one, if not several, doses of naloxone, each of which carries a significant  
18 price tag. Then the patient must be transported to the emergency room, where City employees  
19 typically must wait while the patient is treated. The costs of materials, maintenance, medication,  
20 and staff time, alone, are enormous.

21           235. And, of course, time, materials, and money spent addressing opioid overdoses  
22 means fewer resources and less time to respond to other medical emergencies.  
23  
24  
25  
26

1           236.   Overdoses are not the only opioid-related health emergencies to which the Fire  
2 Department responds. As a result, opioids have had more subtle effects on the Tacoma Fire  
3 Department and its budget. For example, opioids have helped to drive a wave of new health  
4 problems to which the Fire Department must respond. Many of these new health problems,  
5 including infections and infectious diseases as discussed below, fall outside the typical  
6 emergencies for which the Department was designed to respond or address.

7  
8           237.   The rise of these new emergency calls has strained the Fire Department's  
9 resources, and forced it to shift resources from its core missions. The City places medical  
10 emergencies into two categories: Advanced Life Support and Basic Life Support. Advanced Life  
11 Support ("ALS") calls include emergencies that are immediately life-threatening, such as heart  
12 attacks, strokes, overdoses, and car accidents. Responding to these types of acute medical issues  
13 is what fire departments traditionally were organized to do, and ALS calls once made up the bulk  
14 of calls to the Tacoma Fire Department. In contrast, Basic Life Support ("BLS") calls are for  
15 non-acute and non-life threatening medical issues. These might include skin infections, sore  
16 backs, non-life threatening falls or accidents. While the Tacoma Fire Department has always  
17 responded to BLS calls, they typically did not make up the focus of the Department's work.

18  
19           238.   Over the past decade, however, this has changed. By 2012, for example, the  
20 number of BLS incidents to which the Fire Department had responded had already surpassed  
21 ALS incident responses, with 11,985 BLS incidents compared to 8,988 ALS incident responses.  
22 But that imbalance has since skewed even more heavily toward BLS calls. In 2016, the Tacoma  
23 Fire Department responded to 16,718 BLS incidents—a rise of nearly 40% over just 4 years—  
24 while the number of ALS incident responses dropped to 6,622. The Department's inability to  
25  
26

1 respond to more ALS incidents is directly tied to the number of BLS incidents to which it must  
2 respond. As more resources go to BLS calls, fewer are available for ALS responses.

3       239. The rise in BLS calls has also had a direct impact on the Fire Department's  
4 budget. Generally, on ALS calls, the patient has health insurance or other means to pay for the  
5 emergency response, and the Fire Department can bill the insurance company and patient for the  
6 costs of responding to the emergency. By contrast, the vast majority of BLS calls come from  
7 those who lack any means to pay for the emergency response—indeed, lack of access to health  
8 insurance is often a significant factor driving the person to use emergency services for chronic or  
9 sub-critical health care. Because the Tacoma Fire Department responds to all those in the City  
10 who need its services regardless of ability to pay, the rise in BLS incidents has substantially  
11 diminished the Fire Department's ability to recover emergency response costs.  
12

13       240. This dramatic shift towards BLS calls has been driven, in large part, by opioids.  
14 BLS calls often come from people who are addicted to opioids who call the Fire Department in  
15 an attempt to gain access to opioids. Others, particularly those who are homeless or lack access  
16 to basic health care, call the Department for chronic health problems, such as infections or tooth  
17 pain. For many of these BLS callers, their health issues are either directly caused or exacerbated  
18 by opioids.  
19

20       241. Another subtle, but pernicious, way in which the opioid crisis is affecting the  
21 Tacoma Fire Department is its impact on the emergency responders themselves. Of course, being  
22 an EMT or firefighter is a stressful job, exposing the workers to high stress and difficult  
23 situations. But, as opioid-related incidents have increased over the past decade, the stress on  
24 these first responders has intensified dramatically. As noted above, in 2016, the Fire Department  
25 administered Narcan 153 times that year. That means nearly every other day Tacoma EMTs  
26

1 saved the life of someone who had overdosed on opioids. And the overall increase in the volume  
2 of calls means each first responder is responding to ever-increasing numbers of emergency  
3 incidents. In a 24-hour shift, it is now normal for a crew to make twenty-four or more runs, many  
4 of which are done after midnight. This dramatic rise in the number and intensity of emergency  
5 incidents has significant effects on the emergency responders. As a result, the Fire Department  
6 has seen higher turnover as its employees experience burnout, and this in turn means the Fire  
7 Department must devote more time and resources to hiring and training new first responders.  
8 And those employees who remain working with Tacoma Fire Department are at higher risk of  
9 developing secondary traumatic stress, being injured on the job, and losing interest in their work.  
10

11         242. The flood of opioid users in the emergency health care system has also  
12 overwhelmed Tacoma's emergency rooms. Wait times at hospitals such as Tacoma General  
13 Hospital have ballooned, as beds, doctors, and nurses are occupied by patients with opioid-  
14 related health problems.  
15

16         **5. Defendants' acts have caused the City to incur significant additional public**  
17         **safety related costs.**

18         243. The epidemic Defendants have created through their misrepresentations about the  
19 safety and efficacy of their opioids has also dramatically increased public safety costs for the  
20 City of Tacoma.

21         244. The Tacoma Police Department's experience addressing the opioid crisis  
22 illustrates both Defendants' role in creating the opioid epidemic and its devastating and  
23 multifaceted impact on the City.

24         245. In the late 1990s, it was uncommon for police officers to find heroin during  
25 routine arrests or drug enforcement work. And, when officers did come across heroin, it was  
26

1 generally in small amounts. In fact, in 1998, when the Tacoma Police Department seized four  
2 kilograms of heroin, it was one of the biggest heroin busts on the West Coast. A seizure of this  
3 amount was so unusual and atypical at the time that the Police Department flew the heroin to be  
4 tested at the federal drug lab in Los Angeles on a Learjet.

5         246. Sadly, this changed in early 2000s, just as Defendants began to ramp up their  
6 massive efforts to push opioids for everyday and chronic use. In 2001 and 2002, prescription  
7 opioids, including OxyContin, began showing up in drug arrests in Tacoma, and became  
8 ubiquitous over the next few years. During that same time the presence of heroin on the streets of  
9 Tacoma rose steeply. In fact, by 2004, the Tacoma Police Department was not just seizing  
10 kilograms of heroin at a time, but not infrequently finding substantially more amounts, including  
11 recently seizing more than 50 pounds of heroin in a single operation.  
12

13         247. This astounding and devastating rise of opioids—both “legal” and illegal—has  
14 profoundly affected public safety issues in Tacoma, and the Tacoma Police Department’s work  
15 and resources.  
16

17         248. The opioid epidemic has forced the Tacoma Police Department to expend  
18 significant resources fighting drug trafficking in the City. Of course, before Defendants created  
19 the opioid epidemic, illegal drugs were bought and sold in Tacoma. But the cocaine and  
20 methamphetamines that dominated the illegal drug market in the 1990s were more contained,  
21 involved fewer people, and, as a result, were relatively easier to address from a law-enforcement  
22 perspective.  
23

24         249. In the 2000s, however, as prescription opioids and heroin became the kings of the  
25 drug trade, illegal drug trafficking in Tacoma rose significantly. Not only has drug use increased  
26 in Tacoma, drug trafficking is now more complex. Pills and heroin arrive in Tacoma through

1 large, difficult-to-untangle networks that stretch across state lines. Combatting this rise in drug  
2 trafficking has forced the City to put more officers on the street and assign more detectives to  
3 work these drug cases. In fact, from 2011 through 2016, the amount of arrests made by the  
4 Tacoma Police Department directly related to opioid and/or heroin—including unlawful  
5 possession, sale, and distribution—has increased by more than 50%.

7       250. In addition, because many of the sources of illegal opioids in Tacoma come from  
8 large criminal networks, the City has spent considerable time and effort coordinating law  
9 enforcement efforts with other jurisdictions. For example, from October 1, 2009 until May 22,  
10 2017, Tacoma had fulltime officer on the Pill Task Force, a joint effort involving Tacoma,  
11 regional, state, and federal law enforcement entities aimed at combatting illegal sales and  
12 distribution of prescription opioids. During that time, the Tacoma Police officer spent at least  
13 18,000 hours with the Task Force.

15       251. Increased illegal drug trafficking has also caused a rise in other criminal activities  
16 in Tacoma. The price of prescription opioids on the black market is significant, forcing many  
17 addicts to turn to burglary or other property crimes in order to pay for their addiction. Not only  
18 does this impair the quality of life for everyone in Tacoma, the City is forced to address these  
19 crimes, expending police and investigatory resources, which have direct costs to the City. For  
20 example, from 2011 through 2016, both property crimes and retail theft has increased. In 2016  
21 alone, the Tacoma Police Department made 23,153 arrests for property crimes, and 1,497 arrests  
22 for shoplifting.

24       252. Because the City expends significant resources to address increased drug  
25 trafficking and property crimes, the City has had to divert resources from other public safety  
26 issues in the City.



1           253. The opioid epidemic has also increased public safety costs in other aspects, as  
2 well. For example, the City bears significant costs related to an increased number of arrests for  
3 opioid-related crimes. This alone has placed a serious strain on Tacoma's police resources. And  
4 individuals who are addicted to opioids present special challenges to law enforcement.

5           254. Typically, people who are arrested while on opioids cannot be taken directly to  
6 jail, but must first be taken to a hospital where they can be monitored and treated for withdrawal  
7 and other symptoms related to opioid abuse. Although this is the right thing to do for the safety  
8 of the person who is arrested, this practice requires the Police Department to remove an officer  
9 from her or his beat to take the arrested person to the hospital and wait there during a recovery  
10 period, thus effectively removing that officer from the remainder of her or his shift. Additionally,  
11 the costs for longer-term incarceration for an opioid addict are significant. Imprisoned addicts  
12 require extra care and attention, all of which means increased costs.  
13  
14

15           255. In sum, the opioid epidemic created by Defendants has unequivocally caused the  
16 City of Tacoma serious and ongoing harm. The City's costs for health care, public safety, human  
17 and public services, and law enforcement have all risen dramatically, and the City as a  
18 community has suffered serious and tragic consequences as a result.

## 19                                   **V. CLAIMS FOR RELIEF**

### 20           **COUNT ONE — VIOLATIONS OF THE WASHINGTON CONSUMER PROTECTION** 21                                   **ACT, RCW 19.86, *ET SEQ.***

22           256. Plaintiff repeats, reasserts, and incorporates the allegations contained above as if  
23 fully set forth herein.

24           257. The Washington Consumer Protection Act is codified at RCW 19.86 *et seq.*  
25 (“CPA”). The CPA establishes a comprehensive procedure for redressing the violations of  
26

1 applicable law, and municipalities of Washington State like the City of Tacoma can enforce the  
2 CPA and recover damages. RCW 19.86.090. The conduct at issue in this case falls within the  
3 scope of the CPA.

4         258. The CPA prohibits unfair methods of competition and unfair or deceptive acts or  
5 practices in the conduct of any trade or commerce. Defendants engaged and continue to engage  
6 in the same pattern of unfair methods of competition, and unfair and/or deceptive conduct  
7 pursuant to a common practice of misleading the public regarding the purported benefits and  
8 risks of opioids.

9  
10         259. Defendants, at all times relevant to this Complaint, directly and/or through their  
11 control of third parties, violated the CPA by making unfair and/or deceptive representations  
12 about the use of opioids to treat chronic and non-cancer pain, including to physicians and  
13 consumers in the City of Tacoma. Each Defendant also omitted or concealed material facts and  
14 failed to correct prior misrepresentations and omissions about the purported benefits and risks of  
15 opioids. In addition, each Defendant's silence regarding the full risks of opioid use constitutes  
16 deceptive conduct prohibited by the CPA.

17  
18         260. These unfair methods of competition and unfair and/or deceptive acts or practices  
19 in the conduct of trade or commerce were reasonably calculated to deceive the City and its  
20 consumers, and did in fact deceive the City and its consumers. Each Defendant's  
21 misrepresentations, concealments, and omissions continue to this day.

22  
23         261. The City has paid money for prescription opioids for chronic pain. The City has  
24 also paid significant sums of money treating those covered by its health insurance for other  
25 opioid-related health costs. Defendants' misrepresentations have further caused the City to spend  
26

1 substantial sums of money on increased law enforcement, emergency services, social services,  
2 public safety, and other human services in the City.

3         262. But for these unfair methods of competition and unfair and/or deceptive acts or  
4 practices in the conduct of trade or commerce, the City of Tacoma would not have incurred  
5 millions of dollars in payments to Defendants for harmful drugs with limited, if any, benefit, or  
6 the substantial costs to the City related to the epidemic caused by Defendants, as fully described  
7 above.  
8

9         263. Logic, common sense, justice, policy, and precedent indicate Defendants' unfair  
10 and deceptive conduct has caused the damage and harm complained of herein. Defendants knew  
11 or reasonably should have known that their statements regarding the risks and benefits of opioids  
12 were false and misleading, and that their false and misleading statements were causing harm  
13 from their continued production and marketing of opioids. Thus, the harm caused by Defendants'  
14 unfair and deceptive conduct to Tacoma was reasonably foreseeable, including the financial and  
15 economic losses incurred by the City.  
16

17         264. Furthermore, the City brings this cause of action in its sovereign capacity for the  
18 benefit of the State of Washington. The CPA expressly authorizes municipalities to enforce its  
19 provisions and to recover damages for violations of the CPA, and this action is brought to  
20 promote the public welfare of the state and for the common good of the State.  
21

22         265. As a direct and proximate cause of each Defendant's unfair and deceptive  
23 conduct, (i) Plaintiff has sustained and will continue to sustain injuries, and (ii) pursuant to RCW  
24 19.86.090, Plaintiff is entitled to actual and treble damages in amounts to be determined at trial,  
25 attorneys' fees and costs, and all other relief available under the CPA.  
26

1           266. The Court should also grant injunctive relief enjoining Defendants from future  
2 violations of the CPA. Defendants' actions, as complained of herein, constitute unfair  
3 competition or unfair, deceptive or fraudulent acts or practices in violation of the CPA.  
4

5                           **COUNT TWO — PUBLIC NUISANCE**

6           267. Plaintiff repeats, reasserts, and incorporates the allegations contained above as if  
7 fully set forth herein.

8           268. Pursuant to RCW 7.48.010, an actionable nuisance is defined as, *inter alia*,  
9 “whatever is injurious to health or indecent or offensive to the senses . . .”

10          269. Pursuant to RCW 7.48.130, “A public nuisance is one which affects equally the  
11 rights of an entire community or neighborhood, although the extent of the damage may be  
12 unequal.”

13          270. In addition, pursuant to Tacoma Municipal Code 8.30.030, “A public nuisance  
14 consists of doing an unlawful act, or omitting to perform a duty, or permitting an action or  
15 condition to occur or exist which: . . . [u]nreasonably annoys, injures, or endangers the comfort,  
16 repose, health, or safety of others; or . . . [i]s unreasonably offensive to the senses . . .”

17          271. Tacoma and its residents have a right to be free from conduct that endangers their  
18 health and safety. Yet Defendants have engaged in conduct which endangers or injures the health  
19 and safety of the residents of Tacoma by their production, promotion, and marketing of opioids  
20 for use by residents of Tacoma.  
21

22          272. Each Defendant has created or assisted in the creation of a condition that is  
23 injurious to the health and safety of Tacoma and its residents, and interferes with the comfortable  
24 enjoyment of life and property of entire communities and/or neighborhoods in Tacoma.  
25  
26

1           273. Defendants' conduct has caused deaths, serious injuries, and a severe disruption  
2 of the public peace, order and safety, including fueling the homeless and heroin crises facing the  
3 City described herein. Defendants' conduct is ongoing and continues to produce permanent and  
4 long-lasting damage.

5           274. The health and safety of the residents of the City of Tacoma, including those who  
6 use, have used, or will use opioids, as well as those affected by users of opioids, are matters of  
7 substantial public interest and of legitimate concern to the City's citizens and its residents.

8           275. Defendants' conduct has impacted and continues to impact a substantial number  
9 of people within the City of Tacoma and is likely to continue causing significant harm to patients  
10 with chronic pain who are being prescribed and take opioids, their families, and their  
11 communities.

12           276. But for Defendants' actions, there is no doubt that opioid use and ultimately its  
13 misuse and abuse would not be as widespread as it is today, and the massive epidemic of opioid  
14 abuse that currently exists would have been averted.

15           277. Logic, common sense, justice, policy, and precedent indicate Defendants' unfair  
16 and deceptive conduct has caused the damage and harm complained of herein. Defendants knew  
17 or reasonably should have known that their statements regarding the risks and benefits of opioids  
18 were false and misleading, and that their false and misleading statements were causing harm  
19 from their continued production and marketing of opioids. Thus, the public nuisance caused by  
20 Defendants to the City of Tacoma was reasonably foreseeable, including the financial and  
21 economic losses incurred by the City.

22           278. Furthermore, the City brings this cause of action in its sovereign capacity for the  
23 benefit of the State of Washington. The applicable RCWs with respect to a public nuisance and  
24

1 the Tacoma Municipal Code expressly prohibit the conduct complained of herein, and this action  
2 is brought to promote the public welfare of the state and for the common good of the state.

3 279. In addition, engaging in any business in defiance of a law regulating or  
4 prohibiting the same is a nuisance per se under Washington law. Each Defendant's conduct  
5 described herein of deceptively marketing opioids violates Tacoma Municipal Code 8.30.030  
6 and therefore constitutes a nuisance per se.

7  
8 280. As a direct and proximate cause of Defendants' conduct creating or assisting in  
9 the creation of a public nuisance, the City and its residents have sustained and will continue to  
10 sustain substantial injuries.

11 281. Pursuant to RCW 7.48.020, Tacoma requests an order providing for abatement of  
12 the public nuisance that each Defendant has created or assisted in the creation of, and enjoining  
13 Defendants from future violations of RCW 7.48.010 and Tacoma Municipal Code 8.30.030.  
14

### 15 **COUNT THREE — NEGLIGENCE**

16 282. Plaintiff repeats, reasserts, and incorporates the allegations contained above as if  
17 fully set forth herein.

18 283. Under Washington law, a cause of action arises for negligence when defendant  
19 owes a duty to a plaintiff and breaches that duty, and proximately causes the resulting injury.  
20 *Iwai v. State*, 129 Wn. 2d 84, 96, 915 P.2d 1089 (1996).

21 284. Each Defendant owed a duty of care to Tacoma, including but not limited to  
22 taking reasonable steps to prevent the misuse, abuse, and over-prescription of opioids.  
23

24 285. In violation of this duty, Defendants failed to take reasonable steps to prevent the  
25 misuse, abuse, and over-prescription of opioids in Tacoma by misrepresenting the risks and  
26 benefits associated with opioids.

1           286. As set forth above, Defendants’ misrepresentations include falsely claiming that  
2 the risk of opioid addiction was low, falsely instructing doctors and patients that prescribing  
3 more opioids was appropriate when patients presented symptoms of addiction, falsely claiming  
4 that risk-mitigation strategies could safely address concerns about addiction, falsely claiming that  
5 doctors and patients could increase opioid usage indefinitely without added risk, deceptively  
6 marketing that purported abuse-deterrent technology could curb misuse and addiction, and  
7 falsely claiming that long-term opioid use could actually restore function and improve a patient’s  
8 quality of life. Each of these misrepresentations made by Defendants violated the duty of care to  
9 Tacoma.  
10

11           287. As a direct and proximate cause of Defendants’ unreasonable and negligent  
12 conduct, Tacoma has suffered and will continue to suffer harm, and is entitled to damages in an  
13 amount determined at trial.  
14

15           **COUNT FOUR — VIOLATIONS OF THE RACKETEER INFLUENCED AND**  
16           **CORRUPT ORGANIZATIONS ACT (“RICO”), 18 U.S.C. § 1961, *ET SEQ.***

17           288. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference the allegations contained in the  
18 preceding paragraphs of this complaint.

19           289. This claim is brought by the City of Tacoma against each Defendant for actual  
20 damages, treble damages, and equitable relief under 18 U.S.C. § 1964 for violations of 18 U.S.C.  
21 § 1961, *et seq.*

22           290. At all relevant times, each Defendant is and has been a “person” within the  
23 meaning of 18 U.S.C. § 1961(3), because they are capable of holding, and do hold, “a legal or  
24 beneficial interest in property.”  
25  
26

1           291. The City of Tacoma is a “person,” as that term is defined in 18 U.S.C. § 1961(3),  
2 and has standing to sue as it was and is injured in its business and/or property as a result of the  
3 Defendants’ wrongful conduct described herein.

4           292. Section 1962(c) makes it “unlawful for any person employed by or associated  
5 with any enterprise engaged in, or the activities of which affect, interstate or foreign commerce,  
6 to conduct or participate, directly or indirectly, in the conduct of such enterprise’s affairs through  
7 a pattern of racketeering activity . . . ” 18 U.S.C. § 1962(c).

8           293. Section 1962(d) makes it unlawful for “any person to conspire to violate” Section  
9 1962(c), among other provisions. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 1962(d).

10           294. Each Defendant conducted the affairs of an enterprise through a pattern of  
11 racketeering activity, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1962(c) and § 1962(d).

12  
13 **A. Description of the Defendants’ Enterprise.**

14           295. RICO defines an enterprise as “any individual, partnership, corporation,  
15 association, or other legal entity, and any union or group of individuals associated in fact  
16 although not a legal entity.” 18 U.S.C. § 1961(4).

17           296. Under 18 U.S.C. § 1961(4) a RICO “enterprise” may be an association-in-fact  
18 that, although it has no formal legal structure, has (i) a common purpose, (ii) relationships among  
19 those associated with the enterprise, and (iii) longevity sufficient to pursue the enterprise’s  
20 purpose. *See Boyle v. United States*, 556 U.S. 938, 946 (2009).

21           297. Defendants formed such an association-in-fact enterprise—referred to herein as  
22 “the Enterprise.”

23           298. The Enterprise consists of (a) Defendant Purdue, including its employees and  
24 agents; (b) Defendant Endo, including its employees and agents; and (c) Defendant Janssen,  
25  
26



1 including its employees and agents (collectively, the “Manufacturer Defendants”); certain Front  
2 Groups described above, including but not limited to (a) the American Pain Foundation,  
3 including its employees and agents; (b) the American Academy of Pain Medicine, including its  
4 employees and agents; and (c) the American Pain Society, including its employees and agents  
5 (collectively, the “Front Groups”); and certain key opinion leaders, including but not limited to:  
6 (a) Dr. Russell Portenoy, and (b) Kathleen Foley (collectively, the “KOLs”).  
7

8         299. Alternatively, each of the above-named Manufacturer Defendants and Front  
9 Groups constitutes a single legal entity “enterprise” within the meaning of 18 U.S.C. § 1961(4),  
10 through which the members of the enterprise conducted a pattern of racketeering activity. The  
11 separate legal status of each member of the Enterprise facilitated the fraudulent scheme and  
12 provided a hoped-for shield from liability for Defendants and their co-conspirators.  
13

14         300. Alternatively, each of the Manufacturer Defendants, together with the Front  
15 Groups and the KOLs, constitute three separate, associated-in-fact Enterprises within the  
16 meaning of 18 U.S.C. § 1961(4).  
17

18         301. The Enterprise is an ongoing and continuing business organization consisting of  
19 “persons” within the meaning of 18 U.S.C. § 1961(3) that created and maintained systematic  
20 links for a common purpose: to sell drugs, specifically opioids, that have little or no  
21 demonstrated efficacy for the pain they are purported to treat in the majority of persons that  
22 obtain prescriptions for them.  
23

24         302. To accomplish this purpose, the Enterprise engaged in a sophisticated, well-  
25 developed, and fraudulent marketing scheme designed to increase the prescription rate for the  
26 Manufacturer Defendants’ opioid medications and popularize the misunderstanding that the risk  
of addiction to prescription opioids is low when used to treat chronic pain (the “Scheme”).

1 **B. The Enterprise sought to fraudulently increase Defendants' profits and revenues.**

2 303. At all relevant times, each Manufacturer Defendant was aware of the conduct of  
3 the Enterprise, was a knowing and willing participant in that conduct, and reaped profits from  
4 that conduct in the form of increased sales and prescriptions of their opioid medications while  
5 the Front Groups and KOLs received direct payments from the Manufacturer Defendants in  
6 exchange their role in the Enterprise, and to advance the Enterprise's fraudulent marketing  
7 scheme.  
8

9 304. The Enterprise engaged in, and its activities affected, interstate and foreign  
10 commerce because it involved commercial activities across state boundaries, including but not  
11 limited to: (1) the marketing, promotion, and advertisement of Defendants' opioid medicines; (2)  
12 the advocacy at the state and federal level for change in the law governing the use and  
13 prescription of Defendants' opioid medicines; (3) the issuance of prescriptions and prescription  
14 guidelines for Defendants' opioid medication; and (4) the issuance of fees, bills, and statements  
15 demanding payment for prescriptions of Defendants' opioid medications.  
16

17 305. The persons engaged in the Enterprise are systematically linked through  
18 contractual relationships, financial ties, and continuing coordination of activities, as spearheaded  
19 by the Manufacturer Defendants. Each of the Manufacturer Defendants funded and directed the  
20 operations of the KOLs and the Front Groups; in fact, the board of directors of each of the Front  
21 Groups are and were full of doctors who were on the Defendants' payrolls, either as consultants  
22 or speakers at medical events. Moreover, each of the Manufacturer Defendants coordinated and,  
23 at times, co-funded their activities in furtherance of the goals of the Enterprise. This coordination  
24 can also be inferred through the consistent misrepresentations described below.  
25  
26

1           306. There is regular communication between each Manufacturer Defendant, each of  
2 the Front Groups, and each KOL in which information regarding Defendants' opioid medication  
3 and the Defendants' marketing and education scheme to increase prescription rates for those  
4 medications is shared. Typically, this communication occurred, and continues to occur, through  
5 the use of the wires and the mail in which the Manufacturer Defendants, the Front Groups, and  
6 the KOL share information regarding the operation of the Enterprise.  
7

8           307. The Enterprise functioned as a continuing unit for the purposes of executing the  
9 Scheme and when issues arose during the Scheme, each member of the Enterprise agreed to take  
10 actions to hide the Scheme and the existence of the Enterprise.

11           308. Each Defendant participated in the operation and management of the Enterprise  
12 by directing its affairs as described herein.  
13

14           309. While Defendants participated in, and are members of, the Enterprise, they have  
15 an existence separate from the Enterprise, including distinct legal statuses, affairs, offices and  
16 roles, officers, directors, employees, and individual personhood.

17           310. Each of the Manufacturer Defendants orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise  
18 and exerted substantial control over the Enterprise by, at least: (1) making misleading statements  
19 about the purported benefits, efficacy, and risks of opioids to doctors, patients, the public, and  
20 others, in the form of telephonic and electronic communications, CME programs, medical  
21 journals, advertisements, and websites; (2) employing sales representatives or detailers to  
22 promote the use of opioid medications; (3) purchasing and utilizing sophisticated marketing data  
23 (e.g., IMS data) to coordinate and refine the Scheme; (4) employing doctors to serve as speakers  
24 at or attend all-expense paid trips to programs emphasizing the benefits of prescribing opioid  
25 medications; (5) funding, controlling, and operating the Front Groups to target doctors, patients,  
26

1 and lawmakers and provide a veneer of legitimacy to the Manufacturer Defendants' Scheme; (6)  
2 retaining KOLs to promote the use of their opioid medicines; and (7) concealing the true nature  
3 of their relationship with the other members of the Enterprise, including the Front Groups and  
4 the KOLs.

5         311. In addition to the above described actions taken in furtherance of the Enterprise,  
6 Defendant Purdue specifically orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise by: (1) making a number  
7 of misleading statements described below; (2) funding, controlling, and operating the Front  
8 Groups, including the American Pain Foundation and the Pain & Policy Studies Group; (3)  
9 participating in the Pain Care Forum, a coalition of drug makers, trade groups, and nonprofit  
10 organizations that, collectively, spent hundreds of millions of dollars lobbying against opioid-  
11 related measures; (4) retaining KOLs, including Dr. Russell Portenoy and Kathleen Foley to tout  
12 the benefits of opioid medicines; and (5) concealing the true nature of its relationship with the  
13 other members of the Scheme, and the Enterprise, including the Front Groups and the KOLs.  
14

15         312. In addition to the above-described actions taken in furtherance of the Enterprise,  
16 Defendant Endo specifically orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise by: (1) making a number of  
17 misleading statements described herein; (2) sponsoring a 2009 National Initiative on Pain  
18 Control CME program which promoted the concept of pseudoaddiction; (3) funding, controlling,  
19 and operating the Front Groups, including the American Pain Foundation and the Pain & Policy  
20 Studies Group; (3) sponsoring a series of CME programs which claimed that opioid therapy has  
21 been shown to reduce pain and depressive symptoms; (4) supporting and sponsoring guidelines  
22 indicating that opioid medications are effective and can restore patients' quality of life; (5)  
23 participating in the Pain Care Forum, a coalition of drug makers, trade groups, and nonprofit  
24 organizations that, collectively, spent hundreds of millions of dollars lobbying against opioid-  
25  
26

1 related measures; (6) retaining KOLs, including Dr. Russell Portenoy and Kathleen Foley to tout  
2 the benefits of opioid medicines; and (7) concealing the true nature of its relationship with the  
3 other members of the Scheme and the Enterprise, including the Front Groups and the KOLs.

4         313. In addition to the above described actions taken in furtherance of the Enterprise,  
5 Defendant Janssen specifically orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise by: (1) making a number  
6 of misleading statements as detailed herein; (2) funding, controlling, and operating Front Groups,  
7 including the Pain & Policy Studies Group; (3) supporting and sponsoring guidelines indicating  
8 that opioid medications are effective and can restore patients' quality of life; (4) sponsoring,  
9 funding, and editing a website which features an interview indicating that opioid medications can  
10 improve patients' function; (5) participating in the Pain Care Forum, a coalition of drug makers,  
11 trade groups, and nonprofit organizations that, collectively, spent hundreds of millions of dollars  
12 lobbying against opioid-related measures; (6) retaining KOLs, including Dr. Russell Portenoy  
13 and Kathleen Foley to tout the benefits of opioid medicines; and (7) concealing the true nature of  
14 its relationship with the other members of the Enterprise, including the Front Groups and the  
15 KOLs.  
16

17  
18         314. The Front Groups orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise and exerted substantial  
19 control over the Enterprise by, at least: (1) making misleading statements about the purported  
20 benefits, efficacy, and low risks of opioids; (2) holding themselves out as independent advocacy  
21 groups, when in fact their operating budgets are entirely comprised of contributions from opioid  
22 drug manufacturers; (3) lobbying against federal and state proposals to limit opioid use; (4)  
23 publishing treatment guidelines that advised the prescription of opioids; (5) engaging in  
24 'unbranded' advertisement for opioid medicines; (6) hosting medical education programs that  
25  
26

1 touted the benefits of opioids to treat chronic pain while minimizing and trivializing their risks;  
2 and (7) concealing the true nature of their relationship with the other members of the Enterprise.

3         315. In addition to the above described actions taken in furtherance of the Enterprise,  
4 the American Pain Foundation specifically orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise and exerted  
5 substantial control over the Enterprise by, at least: (1) making a number of public statements,  
6 detailed herein, advocating for the prescription of opioids; (2) holding itself out to be an  
7 independent and scientific body despite maintaining an operating budget comprised almost  
8 entirely of donations from Defendants, including Purdue and Endo; (3) consistently lobbying  
9 against federal and state proposals to limit opioid use; (4) publishing treatment guidelines which  
10 encouraged the prescription of opioid medicines including the 2009 “Guideline for the Use of  
11 Chronic Opioid Therapy in Chronic Noncancer Pain-Evidence Review”; and (5) sponsoring  
12 medical education programs advocating for the prescription of opioid medicines.  
13  
14

15         316. In addition to the above described actions taken in furtherance of the Enterprise,  
16 the American Academy of Pain Medicine specifically orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise  
17 and exerted substantial control over the Enterprise by, at least: (1) making a number of public  
18 statements, detailed herein, advocating for the prescription of opioids; (2) holding itself out to be  
19 an independent and scientific body despite maintaining an operating budget comprised almost  
20 entirely of donations from Defendants; (3) consistently lobbying against federal and state  
21 proposals to limit opioid use; (4) publishing treatment guidelines which encouraged the  
22 prescription of opioid medicines; and (5) sponsoring medical education programs advocating for  
23 the prescription of opioid medicines.  
24

25         317. In addition to the above described actions taken in furtherance of the Enterprise,  
26 the American Pain Society specifically orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise and exerted

1 substantial control over the Enterprise by, at least: (1) making a number of public statements,  
2 detailed herein, advocating for the prescription of opioid medications; (2) holding itself out to be  
3 an independent and scientific body despite maintaining an operating budget comprised almost  
4 entirely of donations from Defendants; and (3) publishing treatment guidelines which  
5 encouraged the prescription of opioid medicines including the 2009 “Guideline for the Use of  
6 Chronic Opioid Therapy in Chronic Noncancer Pain-Evidence Review.”  
7

8 318. The KOLs orchestrated the affairs of the Enterprise and exerted substantial  
9 control over the Enterprise by, at least: (1) making misleading statements about the purported  
10 benefits, efficacy, and low risks of opioids; (2) holding themselves out as independent, when in  
11 fact there are systematically linked to and funded by opioid drug manufacturers; and (3)  
12 concealing the true nature of their relationship with the other members of the Enterprise.  
13

14 319. Without the willing participation of each member of the Enterprise, the Scheme  
15 and the Enterprise’s common course of conduct would not have been successful.

16 320. The members of the Enterprise directed and controlled the ongoing organization  
17 necessary to implement the Scheme at meetings and through communications of which Plaintiff  
18 cannot fully know at present, because such information lies in the Defendants’ and others’ hands.

19 **C. Predicate acts: mail and wire fraud.**

20 321. To carry out, or attempt to carry out, the scheme to defraud, the members of the  
21 Enterprise, each of whom is a person associated-in-fact with the Enterprise, did knowingly  
22 conduct or participate, directly or indirectly, in the affairs of the Enterprise through a pattern of  
23 racketeering activity within the meaning of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1961(1), 1961(5) and 1962(c), and  
24 employed the use of the mail and wire facilities, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341 (mail fraud)  
25 and § 1343 (wire fraud).  
26

1           322. Specifically, the members of the Enterprise have committed, conspired to commit,  
2 and/or aided and abetted in the commission of, at least two predicate acts of racketeering activity  
3 (i.e., violations of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1341 and 1343), within the past ten years.

4           323. The multiple acts of racketeering activity which the members of the Enterprise  
5 committed, or aided or abetted in the commission of, were related to each other, posed a threat of  
6 continued racketeering activity, and therefore constitute a “pattern of racketeering activity.”  
7

8           324. The racketeering activity was made possible by the Enterprise’s regular use of the  
9 facilities, services, distribution channels, and employees of the Enterprise.

10          325. The members of the Enterprise participated in the Scheme by using mail,  
11 telephone, and the internet to transmit mailings and wires in interstate or foreign commerce.

12          326. The members of the Enterprise used, directed the use of, and/or caused to be used,  
13 thousands of interstate mail and wire communications in service of their Scheme through  
14 common misrepresentations, concealments, and material omissions.  
15

16          327. In devising and executing the illegal Scheme, the members of the Enterprise  
17 devised and knowingly carried out a material scheme and/or artifice to defraud Plaintiff and the  
18 public to obtain money by means of materially false or fraudulent pretenses, representations,  
19 promises, or omissions of material facts.  
20

21          328. For the purpose of executing the illegal Scheme, the members of the Enterprise  
22 committed these racketeering acts, which number in the thousands, intentionally and knowingly  
23 with the specific intent to advance the illegal Scheme.

24          329. The Enterprise’s predicate acts of racketeering (18 U.S.C. § 1961(1)) include, but  
25 are not limited to:  
26



1       A. Mail Fraud: The members of the Enterprise violated 18 U.S.C. § 1341 by  
2       sending or receiving, or by causing to be sent and/or received, fraudulent materials  
3       via U.S. mail or commercial interstate carriers for the purpose of selling drugs,  
4       specifically opioids, that have little or no demonstrated efficacy for the pain they  
5       are purported to treat in the majority of persons prescribed them.

6       B. Wire Fraud: The members of the Enterprise violated 18 U.S.C. § 1343 by  
7       transmitting and/or receiving, or by causing to be transmitted and/or received,  
8       fraudulent materials by wire for the purpose of selling drugs, specifically opioids,  
9       that have little or no demonstrated efficacy for the pain they are purported to treat  
10      in the majority of persons prescribed them.

11       330. Defendant Purdue's false or misleading use of the mails and wires include, but are  
12      not limited to: (1) a May 31, 1996 press release announcing the release of OxyContin and  
13      indicating that the fear of its addictive properties is exaggerated; (2) a 1990 promotional video in  
14      which Dr. Portenoy, a paid Purdue KOL, understated the risk of opioid addiction; (3) a 1998  
15      promotion video which erroneously cited a 1980 NEJM letter in support of the use of opioids to  
16      treat chronic pain; (4) statements made on its 2000 "Partners Against Pain" website which  
17      claimed that the addiction risk of OxyContin was very low; (5) literature distributed to  
18      physicians which erroneously cited a 1980 NEJM letter in support of the use of opioids to treat  
19      chronic pain; (6) August 2001 statements to Congress by Purdue Executive Vice President and  
20      Chief Operating Officer Michael Friedman regarding the value of OxyContin in treating chronic  
21      pain; (7) a patient brochure entitled "A Guide to Your New Pain Medicine and How to Become a  
22      Partner Against Pain" indicating that OxyContin is non-addicting; (8) a 2001 statement by Senior  
23      Medical Director for Purdue, Dr. David Haddox, indicating that the 'legitimate' use of  
24      OxyContin would not result in addiction; (9) multiple communications by Purdue's sales  
25      representatives regarding the low risk of addiction associated with opioids; (10) statements  
26      included in promotional materials for opioids distributed to doctors via the mail and wires; (11)  
27      statements in a 2003 Patient Information Guide distributed by Purdue indicating that addiction to

1 opioid analgesics in properly managed patients with pain has been reported to be rare; (12)  
2 telephonic and electronic communications to doctors and patients indicating that signs of  
3 addiction in the case of opioid use are likely only the signs of under-treated pain; (13) statements  
4 in Purdue's Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy for OxyContin indicating that drug-seeking  
5 behavior on the part of opioid patients may, in fact, be pain-relief seeking behavior; (14)  
6 statements made on Purdue's website and in a 2010 "Dear Healthcare Professional" letter  
7 indicating that opioid dependence can be addressed by dosing methods such as tapering; (15)  
8 statements included in a 1996 sales strategy memo indicating that there is no ceiling dose for  
9 opioids for chronic pain; (16) statements on its website that abuse-resistant products can prevent  
10 opioid addiction; (17) statements made in a 2012 series of advertisements for OxyContin  
11 indicating that long-term opioid use improves patients' function and quality of life; (18)  
12 statements made in advertising and a 2007 book indicating that pain relief from opioids improve  
13 patients' function and quality of life; (19) telephonic and electronic communications by its sales  
14 representatives indicating that opioids will improve patients' function; and (20) electronic and  
15 telephonic communications concealing its relationship with the other members of the Enterprise.  
16

17  
18 331. Defendant Endo Pharmaceuticals, Inc. also made false or misleading claims in  
19 violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341 and § 1343 including but not limited to: (1) statements made,  
20 beginning in at least 2009, on an Endo-sponsored website, PainKnowledge.com, indicating that  
21 patients who take opioids as prescribed usually do not become addicted; (2) statements made on  
22 another Endo-sponsored website, PainAction.com, indicating that most chronic pain patients do  
23 not become addicted to opioid medications; (3) statements in pamphlets and publications  
24 described by Endo indicating that most people who take opioids for pain relief do not develop an  
25 addiction; (4) statements made on the Endo-run website, Opana.com, indicating that opioid use  
26

1 does not result in addiction; (5) statements made on the Endo-run website, Opana.com,  
2 indicating that opioid dependence can be addressed by dosing methods such as tapering; (6)  
3 statements made on its website, PainKnowledge.com, that opioid dosages could be increased  
4 indefinitely; (7) statements made in a publication entitled “Understanding Your Pain: Taking  
5 Oral Opioid Analgesics” suggesting that opioid doses can be increased indefinitely; (8)  
6 electronic and telephonic communications to its sales representatives indicating that the formula  
7 for its medicines is ‘crush resistant;’ (9) statements made in advertisements and a 2007 book  
8 indicating that pain relief from opioids improves patients’ function and quality of life; (10)  
9 telephonic and electronic communications by its sales representatives indicating that opioids will  
10 improve patients’ function; and (11) telephonic and electronic communications concealing its  
11 relationship with the other members of the Enterprise.  
12

13  
14 332. Defendant Janssen made false or misleading claims in violation of 18 U.S.C. §  
15 1341 and § 1343 including but not limited to: (1) statements on its website,  
16 PrescribeResponsibly.com, indicating that concerns about opioid addiction are overestimated; (2)  
17 statements in a 2009 patient education guide claiming that opioids are rarely addictive when used  
18 properly; (3) statements included on a 2009 Janssen-sponsored website promoting the concept of  
19 opioid pseudoaddiction; (4) statements on its website, PrescribeResponsibly.com, advocating the  
20 concept of opioid pseudoaddiction; (5) statements on its website, PrescribeResponsibly.com,  
21 indicating that opioid addiction can be managed; (6) statements in its 2009 patient education  
22 guide indicating the risks associated with limiting the dosages of pain medicines; (7) telephonic  
23 and electronic communications by its sales representatives indicating that opioids will improve  
24 patients’ function; and (8) telephonic and electronic communications concealing its relationship  
25 with the other members of the Enterprise.  
26

1           333. The American Academic of Pain Medicine made false or misleading claims in  
2 violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341 and § 1343 including but not limited to: (1) statements made in a  
3 2009 patient education video entitled “Finding Relief: Pain Management for Older Adults”  
4 indicating the opioids are rarely addictive; and (2) telephonic and electronic communications  
5 concealing its relationship with the other members of the Enterprise.  
6

7           334. The American Pain Society Quality of Care Committee made a number of false or  
8 misleading claims in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341 and § 1343 including but not limited to: (1) a  
9 May 31, 1996 press release in which the organization claimed there is very little risk of addiction  
10 from the proper use of drugs for pain relief; and (2) telephonic and electronic communications  
11 concealing its relationship with the other members of the Enterprise.  
12

13           335. The American Pain Foundation (“APF”) made a number of false and misleading  
14 claims in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341 and § 1343 including but not limited to: (1) statements  
15 made by an APF Executive Director to Congress indicating that opioids only rarely lead to  
16 addiction; (2) statements made in a 2002 amicus curiae brief filed with an Ohio appeals court  
17 claiming that the risk of abuse does not justify restricting opioid prescriptions for the treatment  
18 of chronic pain; (3) statements made in a 2007 publication entitled “Treatment Options: A Guide  
19 for People Living with Pain” indicating that the risks of addiction associated with opioid  
20 prescriptions have been overstated; (4) statements made in a 2002 court filing indicating that  
21 opioid users are not ‘actual addicts;’ (5) statements made in a 2007 publication entitled  
22 “Treatment Options: A Guide for People Living with Pain” indicating that even physical  
23 dependence on opioids does not constitute addiction; (6) claims on its website that there is no  
24 ceiling dose for opioids for chronic pain; (7) statements included in a 2011 guide indicating that  
25  
26

1 opioids can improve daily function; and (8) telephonic and electronic communications  
2 concealing its relationship with the other members of the Enterprise.

3         336. The KOLs, including Russell Portenoy and Kathleen Foley, made a number of  
4 misleading statements in the mail and wires in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341 and § 1343,  
5 described above, including statements made by Dr. Portenoy in a promotional video indicating  
6 that the likelihood of addiction to opioid medications is extremely low. Indeed, Dr. Portenoy has  
7 since admitted that his statements about the safety and efficacy of opioids were false.  
8

9         337. The mail and wire transmissions described herein were made in furtherance of  
10 Defendants' Scheme and common course of conduct designed to sell drugs that have little or no  
11 demonstrated efficacy for the pain they are purported to treat in the majority of persons  
12 prescribed them; increase the prescription rate for opioid medications; and popularize the  
13 misunderstanding that the risk of addiction to prescription opioids is low when used to treat  
14 chronic pain.  
15

16         338. Many of the precise dates of the fraudulent uses of the U.S. mail and interstate  
17 wire facilities have been deliberately hidden, and cannot be alleged without access to  
18 Defendants' books and records. However, Plaintiff has described the types of predicate acts of  
19 mail and/or wire fraud, including certain specific fraudulent statements and specific dates upon  
20 which, through the mail and wires, Defendants engaged in fraudulent activity in furtherance of  
21 the Scheme.  
22

23         339. The members of the Enterprise have not undertaken the practices described herein  
24 in isolation, but as part of a common scheme and conspiracy. In violation of 18 U.S.C. §  
25 1962(d), the members of the Enterprise conspired to violate 18 U.S.C. § 1962(c), as described  
26 herein. Various other persons, firms, and corporations, including third-party entities and

1 individuals not named as defendants in this Complaint, have participated as co-conspirators with  
2 Defendants and the members of the Enterprise in these offenses and have performed acts in  
3 furtherance of the conspiracy to increase or maintain revenue, increase market share, and/or  
4 minimize losses for the Defendants and their named and unnamed co-conspirators throughout the  
5 illegal scheme and common course of conduct.

6  
7 340. The members of the Enterprise aided and abetted others in the violations of the  
8 above laws.

9 341. To achieve their common goals, the members of the Enterprise hid from Plaintiff  
10 and the public: (1) the fraudulent nature of Defendants' marketing scheme; (2) the fraudulent  
11 nature of statements made by Defendants and on behalf of Defendants regarding the efficacy of  
12 and risk of addiction associated with Defendants' opioid medications; and (3) the true nature of  
13 the relationship between the members of the Enterprise.

14  
15 342. Defendants and each member of the Enterprise, with knowledge and intent,  
16 agreed to the overall objectives of the Scheme and participated in the common course of conduct.  
17 Indeed, for the conspiracy to succeed, each of the members of the Enterprise and their co-  
18 conspirators had to agree to conceal their fraudulent scheme.

19 343. The members of the Enterprise knew, and intended that, Plaintiff and the public  
20 would rely on the material misrepresentations and omissions made by them and suffer damages  
21 and a result.

22  
23 344. As described herein, the members of the Enterprise engaged in a pattern of related  
24 and continuous predicate acts for years. The predicate acts constituted a variety of unlawful  
25 activities, each conducted with the common purpose of obtaining significant monies and  
26 revenues from Plaintiff and the public based on their misrepresentations and omissions.

1           345. The predicate acts also had the same or similar results, participants, victims, and  
2 methods of commission.

3           346. The predicate acts were related and not isolated events.

4           347. The true purposes of Defendants' Scheme were necessarily revealed to each  
5 member of the Enterprise. Nevertheless, the members of the Enterprise continued to disseminate  
6 misrepresentations regarding the nature of Defendants' opioid medications and the functioning  
7 of the Scheme.  
8

9           348. Defendants' fraudulent concealment was material to Plaintiff and the public. Had  
10 the members of the Enterprise disclosed the true nature of the Defendants' opioid medications,  
11 the City of Tacoma would not have acted as it did, including relying on Defendants'  
12 misrepresentations to its detriment.  
13

14           349. The pattern of racketeering activity described above is currently ongoing and  
15 open-ended, and threatens to continue indefinitely unless this Court enjoins the racketeering  
16 activity.

17 **D. The City of Tacoma has been damaged by Defendants' RICO violations.**

18           350. By reason of, and as a result of the conduct of the Enterprise and, in particular, its  
19 pattern of racketeering activity, the City and the public have been injured in their business and/or  
20 property in multiple ways, including but not limited to increased health care costs, increased  
21 human services costs, costs related to dealing with opioid-related crimes and emergencies, and  
22 other public safety costs, as fully described above.  
23

24           351. Defendants' violations of 18 U.S.C. § 1962(c) and (d) have directly and  
25 proximately caused injuries and damages to the City of Tacoma and the public who are entitled  
26

1 to bring this action for three times its actual damages, as well as injunctive/equitable relief, costs,  
2 and reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1964(c).

3 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

4 WHEREFORE, the City of Tacoma respectfully requests the Court order the following  
5 relief:

6 A. An Order that the conduct alleged herein constitutes violations of the Washington  
7 Consumer Protection Act ("CPA"), RCW 19.86 *et seq.*;

8 B. An Order that Plaintiff is entitled to treble damages pursuant to the Washington  
9 CPA;

10 C. An Order that the conduct alleged herein constitutes a public nuisance, including  
11 under RCW 7.48 *et seq.*, Tacoma Municipal Code 8.30.030, and under Washington law;

12 D. An Order that Defendants abate the public nuisance that they caused under  
13 Washington law;

14 E. An Order that Defendants are negligent under Washington law;

15 F. An Order that Defendants have been unjustly enriched at Plaintiff's expense  
16 under Washington law;

17 G. An Order that Defendants' conduct constitutes violations of the Racketeer  
18 Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act ("RICO"), 18 U.S.C. §1961, *et seq.*;

19 H. An Order that Plaintiff is entitled to treble damages pursuant to RICO;

20 I. An Order that Plaintiff is entitled to recover all measure of damages permissible  
21 under the statutes identified herein and under common law;

22 J. An Order that judgment be entered against Defendants in favor of Plaintiff;



1 K. An Order that Plaintiff is entitled to attorney's fees and costs pursuant to any  
2 applicable provision of law, including but not limited to under the Washington CPA and RICO;  
3 and

4 L. An Order awarding any other and further relief deemed just and proper, including  
5 pre-judgment and post-judgment interest on the above amounts.  
6

7 **JURY TRIAL DEMAND**

8 Plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all claims and of all issues so triable.  
9

10 DATED this 13th day of September, 2017.

11 **KELLER ROHRBACK L.L.P.**

12  
13 By /s/ Derek W. Loeser

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22 **CITY OF TACOMA**

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