

# J&J Hit With \$70 Million Risperdal Verdict Over Male Breasts

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A \$70 million verdict won by a Tennessee teenager who blamed Johnson & Johnson's Risperdal drug for causing him to grow female breasts dwarfs awards to other users of the antipsychotic medication who suffered the same side effect.

A Philadelphia jury Friday found J&J officials failed to properly warn the young man and his family that Risperdal could cause him to grow female-size breasts and awarded him damages for emotional distress, said Steve Sheller, one of the teenager's lawyers. The verdict is about 30 times larger than the \$2.5 million awarded to an Alabama man in 2015 who sued J&J after developing size 46 DD breasts. Officials of J&J's Janssen unit, which sells Risperdal, said the drug's safety label contained proper warnings about the breast side effect. The company intends to challenge the verdict.

"We believe this verdict is not justified by the evidence, and that the award is clearly excessive and far out of line with any factual assessment of actual damages," Kristina Chang, a Janssen spokeswoman, said in an e-mailed statement.

Philadelphia Juries

The verdict comes as J&J still faces about 1,500 cases in state court in Philadelphia over claims of the Risperdal side-effect. The ruling is the fifth time the drugmaker has been found by Philadelphia juries to have failed to properly warn users and doctors about the breast-development risk.

“This verdict sends a clear message to J&J to step up and take responsibility for the damage they’ve done to these young men and to set up a global settlement program so the families don’t have to continue to suffer through these trials,” Sheller said in an interview.

In 2013, J&J agreed to pay \$2.2 billion to resolve criminal and civil probes into allegations that it illegally marketed Risperdal to children and the elderly. The settlement, which included marketing claims about two other J&J drugs, was one of the largest U.S. health-fraud penalties in history.

Past Verdicts

New Brunswick, New Jersey-based J&J has been settling some of the male breast cases filed in Philadelphia but has been hit with several verdicts, starting in February 2015 with the \$2.5 million awarded to Austin Pledger, an autistic man from Alabama. In November, a separate jury in the same court later awarded \$1.75 million to another Risperdal user who developed breasts.

Lawyers for the Tennessee resident, identified as A.Y. in court papers, told jurors he started taking Risperdal at age 5 to treat a psychiatric disorder and never received a warning about breast development. The teen is now 16, according to the filings.

They argued J&J officials intentionally kept pediatricians and psychiatrists in the dark about study results showing Risperdal caused abnormal breast development in boys so they’d keep writing prescriptions, Sheller said.

The case is A.Y. v. Janssen, No. 130402094, Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas (Philadelphia).