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## Phila. Jury Returns \$8 Billion Verdict Against Johnson & Johnson Over Risperdal

**By Max Mitchell**

*Of the Legal staff*

The Philadelphia jury deliberating in the first punitive damages trial over Johnson & Johnson's conduct in marketing the antipsychotic drug Risperdal has slammed the company with an \$8 billion verdict.

The award comes after more than three weeks of trial in the case *Murray v. Janssen Pharmaceuticals*. The award is the largest to date in the Risperdal litigation, which consists of nearly 7,000 cases pending in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas.

According to **Thomas R. Kline of Kline & Specter**, who tried the case along with Houston attorney Jason Itkin of Arnold & Itkin, the jury ruled 10-2 in awarding the multibillion-dollar verdict against the company, which he said is worth \$60.7 billion.

"This jury resoundingly told Johnson & Johnson that its actions were deliberate and reckless. And the conduct that the jury saw in this courtroom, clearly and convincingly, which is our legal standard, [was] a company that disregarded the safety of the most vulnerable of children," Kline said. "This is an important moment, not only for this litigation, but for J&J, which is a company that has lost its way."

Sheller P.C. attorney Stephen Sheller is also counsel in the litigation.

The verdict came less than five hours after attorneys made closing arguments, with Kline telling jurors to "send a message," and defense counsel, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius attorney Ethel Johnson of Houston, telling jurors the plaintiffs failed to meet their burden.

The case was tried before Judge Kenneth Powell. It marked the first time a Pennsylvania jury has been able to consider awarding punitive damages in a Risperdal case. Although the case initially came to a \$1.75 million compensatory damages verdict in 2015, Murray was allowed to proceed to a punitive damages phase after the Pennsylvania Superior Court last year reversed a lower court's ruling that barred recovery on punitive damages claims.

According to a review of The Legal's archives, the award is the largest verdict since 1994, when The Legal began tracking each year's largest verdict and settlement. The only higher award came in 2000, when Pennsylvania received \$11.3 billion as part of its share of the nationwide \$206 billion settlement to end tobacco litigation.

In a statement to the press, J&J spokesman Andrew Wheatley said the award was "grossly disproportionate" to the compensatory award and the company "is confident it will be overturned."