



This week the drug company AstraZeneca paid out £125m to settle a class action. More than 17,500 patients claim the company withheld information showing that schizophrenia drug quetiapine (tradenname Seroquel) can cause diabetes. So why do companies pay out money before cases get to court?

An interesting feature of litigation is that various documents enter the public domain. This is how we know about the tobacco industry's evil plans to target children, the fake academic journal that Elsevier created for Merck's marketing department, and so on.

In trial 15, commissioned by AstraZeneca, patients with schizophrenia who were in remission were randomly assigned to receive either AstraZeneca's quetiapine, or a cheap, old-fashioned drug called haloperidol. After a year, the patients on Seroquel were doing worse: they had more relapses and worse ratings on various symptom scales. These negative findings were left unpublished: to use Tumas's word, they were "buried".

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