

Rising Star: Williams & Connolly's Paul Boehm

By **Emily Field**

Law360, New York (April 5, 2016, 11:38 PM ET) -- Williams & Connolly partner Paul Boehm's ability to master complicated scientific information and craft it into a compelling narrative to present to a jury, representing clients such as Merck & Co. Inc., has earned him a spot on Law360's list of top trial attorneys under the age of 40.

A Law360 Rising Star, 39-year-old Boehm became partner in 2013 at the firm, where he is one of the leaders in its product liability and mass tort practice group. His work managing cases from the early stages of discovery all the way to verdict have earned him recognition as a top leader in the realm of product liability defense.

According to Boehm, he discovered an affinity for litigating matters involving complex scientific and medical data shortly after beginning his practice in 2004.

"I was in the liberal arts like so many in this profession," Boehm said. "Now I feel like I've earned a few science or medical degrees a few times over."

A key part of his trial preparation is making sure he knows everything he possibly can about the case and spending hours brainstorming with his team how scenarios can play out, Boehm said.

"The wins that I've had and we've had are the result of team effort," Boehm said. "This is a team sport, you win by having the best team from top to bottom."

And while it's important to be able to distil information and present it in a way and a style that's easily understood, it's also important to not talk down to jurors, Boehm said.

"Not everyone can do that — you have to talk to them like a human being," he said.

Currently, Boehm is lead national counsel for Merck in federal and state suits claiming its Type 2 diabetes drugs, Januvia and Janumet, are linked to pancreatic cancer, according to the firm.

RISING
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
STAR



Paul Boehm
Williams & Connolly

In 2013, the U.S. Panel on Multidistrict Litigation combined suits over diabetes drugs marketed by Merck and others that allegedly caused pancreatic cancer. But the FDA and European Medicines Agency found no firm evidence the drugs are connected to pancreas problems, according to a study released in February 2014.

According to Williams & Connolly, Boehm presented scientific evidence in the cases over a two-day “Science Day” to the judges overseeing the MDL and cases consolidated in California state court.

In November, Merck and other companies won summary judgment and defeated state law failure-to-warn claims in the MDL when a California federal judge said the U.S. Food and Drug Administration would have rejected label warnings of a potential connection between the drugs and pancreatic cancer.

Boehm noted that his work involves spending a lot of time with scientists and learning about their work.

“I think it’s wonderful to be able to spend time with scientists who have done careful and important and often lifesaving work — I try to understand their process so there is a development of mutual respect,” Boehm said.

He is also trial counsel in the last remaining personal injury case still pending in the painkiller Vioxx MDL, according to the firm.

Merck withdrew Vioxx from the market in 2004 after scientific studies showed a significantly increased risk of heart attacks after 18 months of continuous use. After the recall, Merck was hit with thousands of personal injury and wrongful death suits, along with complaints for economic loss, which were merged in the MDL in Louisiana a decade ago.

--Editing by Philip Shea.

All Content © 2003-2016, Portfolio Media, Inc.