

'He demonstrated a shocking disregard for human life': Prosecutor slams pharmacist accused of causing deadly meningitis outbreak which killed 76 and sickened 778

- Glenn Chin oversaw the production of steroids in filthy conditions, a court heard
- Those drugs led to an outbreak that sickened 778 and killed 76 nationwide
- Chin, 49, is charged with second-degree murder for failing to ensure sanitary standards; he faces a life sentence

Daily Mail Mia De Graaf 19 September 2017

A prosecutor has slammed a pharmacist for showing a 'shocking disregarding for human life' as he stands accused of triggering a meningitis outbreak with contaminated drugs which killed 76 people and sickening another 778.

Glenn Chin, a former supervisory pharmacist at New England Compounding Center, oversaw the production in filthy conditions of tainted steroids, the court heard.

Those drugs contained mold, and led to a deadly nationwide outbreak of the infection in 2012, when NECC sent out nearly 18,000 vials of the infected injectable steroids to 23 states.

In June, the co-founder of the now-defunct production company, Barry Cadden, was sentenced to nine years in prison after he was cleared of murder but found guilty of racketeering and fraud.

Now, Chin, 49, faces a life sentence if found guilty of second-degree murder for failing to meet sanitary standards.



Glenn Chin, a former supervisory pharmacist at New England Compounding Center, oversaw the production in filthy conditions of tainted steroids, a court in Boston heard on Tuesday

HOW THE DRUGS CAUSED MENINGITIS

NECC distributed nearly 18,000 vials of mold-contaminated steroids to 23 states in 2012. The drugs triggered meningitis in hundreds of people.

This specific strain of the illness was caused by a fungus called *Exserohilum rostratum*, a black mold that normally attacks plants. The fungus is so rare in humans that doctors had no idea how long it would incubate in the human body, as they struggled to treat the influx of cases.

Assistant U.S. Attorney George Varghese opened court on Tuesday saying Chin recklessly failed to ensure the compounding pharmacy's drugs were produced in sanitary conditions in order to keep up with demand from hospitals nationally for its products.

He said Chin directed staff in NECC's so-called clean rooms, where the medications were made, to skip cleaning despite the presence of insects, mice and mold.

'His actions demonstrated a shocking - a shocking - disregard for human life,' he said.

But Stephen Weymouth, a lawyer for Chin, said there was no proof he was guilty of second-degree murder. 'He didn't do anything to kill these people,' Weymouth said, urging jurors to look past the emotions the case raises.

Weymouth said blame instead lies with Barry Cadden, NECC's co-founder and former president. Cadden was sentenced in June to nine years in prison after he was found guilty of racketeering and fraud charges but cleared of murder.

'He called all the shots, he told people what to do,' Weymouth said. 'No one could tell Barry Cadden what to do.'

Chin and Cadden were among 14 people indicted in 2014 for their roles in the outbreak and the only two to be accused of second-degree murder over 25 deaths. The murder charges were brought under a racketeering law.

The outbreak led Congress in 2013 to pass a law that aimed to clarify the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's ability to oversee large compounding pharmacies.

Chin faces other charges including mail fraud. He could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted of second-degree murder.

Lesser charges were filed against 12 other people. Three have pleaded guilty, while a federal judge dismissed charges against two defendants in October 2016. Charges remain pending against the other seven.