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## Shook Hardy Adds 6 in Phila. as One-Time Dechert Colleagues Reunite

BY LIZZY MCLELLAN

**S**hook, Hardy & Bacon has continued its products liability-focused march into the Northeast, adding a group of four partners and two associates to its Philadelphia office.

The move brings back together a group of lawyers who previously practiced together at Dechert, and it advances Kansas City-founded Shook Hardy's strategy of establishing a strong foothold in all four corners of the country.

Partners Bob Limbacher, Eben Flaster, Adam Tolin and Margaret O'Neill joined Shook Hardy effective March 1, coming from the Philadelphia office of Baltimore-based Goodell, DeVries, Leech & Dann. Joining with them are associates Brian Lands and Katelyn Romeo and two paralegals.

"Our little office does a lot of pharmaceutical litigation defense work and Shook has an excellent reputation in that area," Limbacher said. He estimated the group's book of business was about \$4 million last year.

Their clients, according to federal court records, have included Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Endo Pharmaceuticals, Takeda Pharmaceuticals and Jason Pharmaceuticals.

With their move, Goodell DeVries does not have other lawyers who are currently permanent residents of its Philadelphia. However, Goodell DeVries managing partner Linda Woolf said the firm still has ongoing pharmaceutical and products liability

matters in Philadelphia that will not depart with the Shook Hardy group, and it has other lawyers who are licensed to practice law in Pennsylvania even though they are not based there. Goodell DeVries is actively recruiting in Philadelphia, she added.

Woolf said her firm has "a very good relationship" with Shook Hardy and has worked with its lawyers on many matters.

"We respect the firm and expect that we will continue to work with them in pharmaceutical and other matters in the future. Our former partners and associates came to us from large national firms and we believe they are more comfortable practicing in that setting," she said.

Shook Hardy established its presence in Philadelphia in 2012, when it brought on partner Sean Wajert from Dechert—Limbacher and Flaster went to Goodell DeVries that same year, when it appeared that Dechert was pivoting away from products liability and mass torts, and toward more profitable litigation. Tolin moved from Dechert to Weil, Gotshal & Manges in 2012, along with a couple more lawyers, but he joined his colleagues at Goodell DeVries in 2018.

Last year, Shook Hardy added to the Philadelphia office and launched a presence in Boston when it brought on a group of environmental and toxic torts lawyers from White and Williams.

Explaining his firm's focus on growth in the Northeast, Wajert said a number of longtime Shook Hardy clients are based in the region, particularly in the pharmaceutical industry. And others



Front row, from right: Partner Bob Limbacher and associate Katelyn Romeo. Back row, right to left: Partners Margaret O'Neill, Eben Flaster and Adam Tolin, with Shook, Hardy & Bacon.

"find themselves dragged into court here on a regular basis."

"Even in this day and age of technology and communication, a lot of our clients appreciate having at least some of our lawyers in a place where they can visit face-to-face," Wajert said.

In terms of rate structure and flexibility, not much will change for the group in moving from Goodell DeVries to Shook Hardy, Limbacher said. But their new firm's geographic footprint and practice depth is a game changer, he said, mentioning "the number of lawyers who have real experience doing exactly the kind of work that we've been doing."

Shook Hardy has 15 offices and more than 460 lawyers, according to 2019 Am Law 200 data.

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