Digital Gatekeepers and Platform Power: Three Landmark Lawsuits Reshaping Healthcare and Tech Mark

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Abstract

Three pivotal antitrust lawsuits from 2020-2025 have fundamentally challenged dominant technology platforms control access to digital ecosystems and data. Ep Games v. Apple, Particle Health v. Epic Systems, and Real Time Medical Systems PointClickCare reveal striking parallels in how market-leading platforms levera their gatekeeper positions to stifle competition and innovation. This analysis exa the common threads running through these cases: the concentration of platform power, information blocking as an anticompetitive tool, and the transformation essential digital infrastructure into competitive weapons.

For health tech entrepreneurs, these cases illuminate critical dynamics in data a interoperability, and platform competition that will shape the industry's future. outcomes suggest a judicial recognition that traditional antitrust frameworks m evolve to address the unique challenges posed by digital platforms that control b the infrastructure and the rules of competition.

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Introduction

The digital economy has witnessed an unprecedented concentration of power an platform companies that control the essential infrastructure for innovation and commerce. Three landmark lawsuits spanning 2020 to 2025 illuminate how this concentration manifests across different sectors, revealing remarkably similar patterns of behavior despite occurring in vastly different markets. Epic Games' l with Apple over App Store policies, Particle Health's antitrust challenge against Systems' healthcare data monopoly, and Real Time Medical Systems' fight agains PointClickCare's information blocking practices represent more than isolated disputes over specific business practices. They collectively demonstrate how dor platforms systematically leverage their gatekeeper positions to eliminate compet threats while maintaining the veneer of legitimate business justification.

These cases matter profoundly for health tech entrepreneurs who must navigate increasingly complex landscape where access to data, patients, and distribution channels is controlled by a handful of powerful intermediaries. The healthcare industry, traditionally insulated from some of the competitive dynamics seen in consumer technology, now faces similar challenges as digital platforms become t primary means of delivering care, managing patient information, and facilitating provider-payer interactions. Understanding how courts are beginning to address

platform power provides crucial insights for entrepreneurs seeking to build scal health tech businesses without falling victim to anticompetitive gatekeeping.

The Platform Dominance Paradigm

Digital platforms occupy a unique position in modern markets as both facilitato economic activity and participants in the markets they enable. This dual role cre inherent conflicts of interest that traditional antitrust analysis struggled to addr for decades. Platforms like Apple's App Store, Epic Systems' electronic health re infrastructure, and PointClickCare's long-term care management system functic essential facilities that competitors cannot reasonably duplicate, yet they simultaneously compete with the businesses that depend on their infrastructure

The power these platforms wield extends far beyond their direct market share. E Systems controls the health information of up to 94 percent of Americans, while Apple's App Store practices affect billions of iOS users worldwide. This concent creates what economists call "ecosystem lock-in," where switching costs become prohibitively high for both users and complementary service providers. For heal tech companies, this means that gaining access to patients often requires navigat through gatekeepers who may view innovative services as competitive threats to own offerings.

The platform dominance paradigm reveals itself through several common characteristics across these cases. First, each platform achieved its position thro legitimate innovation and network effects, making traditional monopolization cl difficult to prove. Second, the platforms maintain their dominance not through exclusionary contracts or predatory pricing, but through control over the rules o access and participation. Third, when competitive threats emerge, these platforr leverage their infrastructure control to create barriers that would be impossible market entrants to overcome through superior products or services alone.

Epic v. Apple: The Consumer Platform Precedent

The Epic Games versus Apple lawsuit established crucial precedents for how co evaluate platform power in digital ecosystems. Epic Games specifically challenge Apple's restrictions on apps from having other in-app purchasing methods outsi the one offered by the App Store, arguing that Apple's practices around the App and its payment system were in violation of the federal Sherman Act and the California Cartwright Act. The case revealed how seemingly neutral platform pc can function as powerful competitive weapons when controlled by a dominant intermediary.

Apple's 30 percent commission structure exemplified this dynamic. While the company justified this fee as compensation for providing valuable services inclu payment processing, fraud protection, and app distribution, critics viewed it as a arbitrary tax on digital commerce enabled by Apple's control over iOS device ac Epic's argument disregarded the fact that Apple's App Store and ecosystem are relatively similar to those of Sony's Playstation and Microsoft's Xbox platforms, the company chose to challenge only Apple, suggesting strategic calculation abo where legal challenges might succeed.

The case's resolution proved complex and nuanced. Although Gonzalez Rogers h rejected the monopoly claims, she ordered Apple to lower the barriers protectin previously exclusive payment system for in-app digital transactions and allow developers to display links to alternative options. However, Apple's subsequent implementation of these requirements revealed the challenge of regulating platf behavior through traditional judicial remedies. Apple implemented App Store p to allow developers to link to alternative payment options, but the policies still required the developer to provide a 27% revenue share back to Apple, and heavil restricted how they could be shown in apps.

The ongoing enforcement battles demonstrate how platforms can superficially c with court orders while maintaining substantive control. In April 2025 Rogers fc for Epic that Apple had willfully violated her injunction, placing further restrict on Apple including banning them from collecting revenue shares from non-App payment methods or imposing any restrictions on links to such alternative paym options. This cat-and-mouse dynamic between judicial oversight and platform

adaptation became a template for understanding how enforcement challenges w play out in subsequent cases involving healthcare platforms.

Particle Health v. Epic Systems: Healthcare Data as Moat

The Particle Health versus Epic Systems lawsuit represents perhaps the most di application of platform dominance theory to healthcare technology. Particle Hea filed a federal antitrust lawsuit against Epic Systems Corporation, alleging Epic using its monopoly power over electronic health records to bar Particle from the fledgling payer platform market. This case illuminated how control over healthc data infrastructure creates similar competitive dynamics to those seen in consu technology platforms, but with potentially more severe consequences for patient and innovation.

Epic Systems' dominance in electronic health records created a unique form of platform power rooted in clinical workflow integration and data network effects Particle, founded in 2018, seeks to help its customers, including providers and h plans, access and understand patient data held by Epic and other EHR systems. company acts as a middleman, using an API to enable health data access betwee and its own customers, positioning itself as a neutral facilitator of data exchange

The competitive threat Particle posed to Epic became apparent through the lens emerging payer platform markets. These platforms enable health insurance com and other payers to access and analyze patient data for care coordination, risk assessment, and quality improvement. Epic's manipulation of EHR access is alre having negative consequences for doctors and patients. The complaint details hc network of community oncology practices has seen over 2,800 patients' quality o harmed, due to Epic deliberately blocking important clinical information to doc

Epic's response to this competitive challenge followed a pattern remarkably sim Apple's approach with Epic Games. Rather than directly blocking access, Epic leveraged its influence within industry governance frameworks to create seemin legitimate barriers. Epic said its 15-member Care Everywhere Governing Counc

flagged three companies, who are Particle Health customers, for questionable us patient data not related to patient care or treatment. This approach allowed Epi position its actions as protecting patient privacy rather than stifling competitior

The dispute revealed fundamental tensions about data access rights in healthcar "treatment" purpose of use is the only data request healthcare organizations are required to respond to, according to health IT experts, yet legitimate healthcare activities often extend beyond narrow treatment definitions. Health navigators a insurance brokers require data to help patients select the best providers and pla and pharma companies need data to maximize the success of their clinical trials. Epic's ability to unilaterally determine which use cases qualify as legitimate effectively gives the company veto power over entire categories of healthcare innovation.

Real Time Medical Systems v. PointClickCare: Information Blocking a Weapon

The Real Time Medical Systems versus PointClickCare case provided the cleares example of how healthcare platforms can weaponize technical barriers to elimin competitive threats. Real Time filed a lawsuit against PointClickCare in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland back in January 2024, alleging inforn blocking and other practices that substantially interfered with its business oper and harmed its facility customers. This case demonstrated how the 21st Century Cures Act's information blocking provisions could be enforced against anticompetitive behavior.

Real Time Medical Systems represented a new generation of healthcare analytics companies leveraging artificial intelligence to predict patient outcomes. Real Ti an analytics firm offering predictive analytics through AI to skilled nursing facil Typically, Real Time analyzes data from the nursing facility and acute care settir a daily basis or more often, and reports which patients are at risk of adverse ever

The company's success depended on accessing patient data stored in PointClick electronic health record system, which served thousands of long-term care facili

PointClickCare's competitive response proved more brazen than the sophisticat governance manipulation seen in the Epic Systems case. Without warning, PCC to deploy CAPTCHAs on some of Real Time's user IDs. CAPTCHAs are securit devices which typically utilize letters that are designed to be solved only by a hu However, Judge Xinis wrote in the opinion, "No evidence supports that PCC hac legitimate good faith use for wholly inscrutable CAPTCHAs which, by definitio blocked Real Time from getting the very records it needs to exist".

The judicial response in this case proved particularly significant for establishing precedent around information blocking. The United States District Court for th District of Maryland granted Real Time a preliminary injunction, finding that PointClickCare's actions likely constituted information blocking under the 21st Century Cures Act. Judge Xinis largely agreed with Real Time's argument that P was using captcha tests, which are designed to tell humans and bots apart in ord block access for the latter, to instead stifle a competitor as it tried to break into Time's diagnostic analytics marketplace with its own product.

The court's analysis revealed how technical implementation details could expose anticompetitive intent. Even more damning is the timing of such deployments, w support that PCC used those CAPTCHAs as a device to hamstring or eliminate Time as a competitor. This temporal analysis became crucial for distinguishing between legitimate security measures and anticompetitive conduct, providing a framework that could apply to similar cases involving healthcare platforms.

Convergent Patterns in Platform Contr

These three lawsuits reveal remarkably consistent patterns in how dominant platforms exercise competitive control, despite operating in different markets w different regulatory frameworks. The convergence suggests that platform domin creates similar incentives and opportunities for anticompetitive behavior regard the underlying industry context.

The first common pattern involves the weaponization of governance structures. I each case, the dominant platform leveraged seemingly neutral governance mecha to create competitive barriers. Apple used App Store review processes to delay a complicate alternative payment implementations. Epic Systems influenced indus interoperability frameworks to question competitors' data access rights. PointClickCare deployed ostensibly security-related technical measures to block automated data access. These approaches allowed platforms to maintain plausib deniability while effectively eliminating competitive threats.

The second pattern centers on the transformation of infrastructure services into competitive weapons. Each platform originally provided valuable infrastructure enabled innovation and economic activity. Apple's App Store simplified software distribution and payment processing. Epic Systems' Care Everywhere network facilitated clinical data exchange. PointClickCare's platform streamlined long-te care management. However, when these platforms faced competitive challenges, selectively degraded or restricted access to their infrastructure in ways that harr competitors while maintaining access for preferred partners.

The third convergent pattern involves the strategic use of compliance and safety rhetoric to justify anticompetitive actions. Apple emphasized developer compliа and user security when restricting payment alternatives. Epic Systems highlighte patient privacy and clinical data integrity when blocking Particle Health's acces PointClickCare claimed system performance and security concerns when deploy indecipherable CAPTCHAs. This rhetorical strategy proved particularly effectiv because it aligned platform interests with legitimate regulatory concerns, makin judicial intervention more difficult.

The timing and implementation of these restrictions provided crucial evidence c anticompetitive intent across all three cases. Courts increasingly recognized tha simultaneous emergence of competitive threats and access restrictions could not dismissed as coincidental. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a distri court's order and kept in place a preliminary injunction that bars PointClickCa from blocking Real Time's access to its clients' patient data, while similar enforcement actions emerged in the Apple and Epic Systems cases.

Implications for Health Tech Innovatior

The outcomes of these lawsuits carry profound implications for health tech entrepreneurs navigating an increasingly platform-dependent ecosystem. The ju recognition of information blocking as an antitrust violation provides new legal for challenging anticompetitive behavior, but also reveals the sophisticated strat platforms employ to maintain competitive advantages while appearing to comply regulatory requirements.

For entrepreneurs building solutions that depend on accessing existing healthca data, these cases provide both warnings and opportunities. The warning lies in understanding how incumbent platforms may respond to competitive threats thr selective access restrictions, governance manipulation, and technical barriers disguised as security measures. Companies that achieve early success in extracti value from platform-controlled data should anticipate resistance and prepare leg strategies accordingly.

The opportunity emerges from judicial willingness to apply antitrust principles digital platforms and information blocking statutes to healthcare technology. Th provision of affordable, quality healthcare depends directly on access to such rec as one court noted in supporting continued data access. This judicial recognitior suggests that health tech innovations with clear patient benefits may receive stro legal protection than similar innovations in purely commercial contexts.

Health tech entrepreneurs must also consider how platform competition dynami affect strategic partnerships and business model design. Companies that positio themselves as neutral facilitators of data exchange or interoperability may find stronger legal footing than those that directly compete with platform services. However, the Particle Health case demonstrates that even neutral positioning pr limited protection when platform operators perceive existential competitive thre

The enforcement mechanisms emerging from these cases suggest that informatic blocking claims may become more viable tools for challenging anticompetitive platform behavior. The 21st Century Cures Act's information blocking provisior

provide specific statutory authority that may be easier to enforce than traditiona antitrust claims, particularly when combined with evidence of competitive harm Health tech companies should document access restrictions and their timing rel to competitive activities to build stronger cases for future enforcement actions.

These lawsuits also highlight the importance of industry governance participatic health tech companies. As the Epic Systems case demonstrated, influence within interoperability frameworks and industry standard-setting bodies can become competitive weapons. Emerging health tech companies should invest in governa participation not only to shape favorable standards but also to prevent incumbe from manipulating governance structures to create competitive barriers.

Regulatory Response and Future Outlo

The regulatory response to these platform competition challenges has evolved significantly as policymakers recognize the limitations of traditional antitrust frameworks in addressing digital platform dominance. The 21st Century Cures A information blocking provisions proved particularly effective in the healthcare context, providing more specific and enforceable standards than general antitrus statutes.

The European Union's Digital Markets Act represents perhaps the most comprehensive regulatory response to platform dominance, creating specific obligations for companies designated as digital gatekeepers. While initially focu on consumer technology platforms, the framework's principles increasingly influ healthcare technology regulation. The success of Epic Games in challenging App practices in European markets demonstrates how regulatory frameworks specifi designed for platform competition can achieve results that traditional antitrust litigation struggles to obtain.

Healthcare-specific regulations continue evolving in response to these competiti dynamics. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has strengthened interoperability requirements and information blocking enforcement, while the of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology has clarified tha

competitive concerns cannot justify restricting legitimate data access. These regulatory developments suggest that healthcare platforms may face more aggres oversight than their counterparts in other industries.

The judicial precedents established by these cases will likely influence future platform competition disputes across multiple industries. Courts have demonstr increasing sophistication in analyzing platform business models and competitive dynamics, moving beyond simple market share calculations to examine structura competition concerns. This evolution suggests that future platform competition may receive more favorable treatment from courts that better understand how d platforms exercise competitive control.

The enforcement landscape appears to be shifting toward more aggressive actior against platform anticompetitive behavior. Rogers found for Epic that Apple hac willfully violated her injunction, demonstrating judicial willingness to find cont when platforms fail to implement court orders in good faith. This precedent ma encourage more aggressive enforcement actions and higher penalties for platfor operators who attempt to evade competitive obligations through technical comp strategies.

Conclusion

The Epic Games versus Apple, Particle Health versus Epic Systems, and Real Ti Medical Systems versus PointClickCare lawsuits collectively illuminate a fundar transformation in how competition operates within digital platform ecosystems. These cases demonstrate that traditional antitrust analysis must evolve to addres unique challenges posed by platforms that control both essential infrastructure the rules governing market participation.

For health tech entrepreneurs, these lawsuits provide crucial insights into the competitive dynamics that will shape industry development over the coming dec The judicial recognition that information blocking can constitute antitrust viola creates new opportunities to challenge anticompetitive platform behavior, while sophisticated strategies platforms employ to maintain competitive advantages re

the need for careful legal and strategic planning when building platform-depend businesses.

The convergent patterns across these cases suggest that platform dominance cre similar competitive incentives regardless of industry context. Health tech entrepreneurs must therefore learn from platform competition dynamics in othe sectors while recognizing the unique regulatory and clinical constraints that sha healthcare technology markets. The success of information blocking claims in healthcare suggests that industry-specific regulations may provide more effectiv for addressing platform anticompetitive behavior than general antitrust statutes

Looking forward, the regulatory and judicial environment appears increasingly favorable to challenges against platform anticompetitive behavior. However, plat have demonstrated remarkable adaptability in maintaining competitive advantag while appearing to comply with regulatory requirements. Health tech entrepren must therefore balance optimism about improved regulatory protection with rea assessment of the sophisticated strategies platforms employ to maintain compet control.

The ultimate significance of these lawsuits may lie not in their immediate outco but in their demonstration that platform power is not absolute and that legal frameworks can evolve to address previously unchecked forms of competitive ha For an industry as critical as healthcare, where innovation directly affects patien outcomes and care quality, ensuring competitive markets for health technology r be essential for achieving the full potential of digital transformation in healthca delivery.

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