

Life Sciences Group Of The Year: Covington

By **Gianna Ferrarin**

Law360 (February 26, 2026, 4:03 PM EST) -- Covington & Burling LLP's recent work advising Novartis on its \$12 billion acquisition of Avidity Biosciences Inc., boosting the Swiss pharmaceutical giant's neuroscience portfolio, is among the reasons the firm landed among the 2025 Law360 Life Sciences Groups of the Year.

Over 250 attorneys at the firm focus their practice on the life sciences industry, with capabilities spanning litigation, corporate transactions, government investigations, public policy and regulatory compliance, Covington practice leaders told Law360.

"One of the hallmarks of our practice is how we integrate all those different areas of expertise together and then do that globally," said Mike Labson, who co-chairs Covington's global life sciences industry group and serves as managing partner of the firm's newest office, in Boston. Covington opened the office in 2023, pointing to the strength of its life sciences work as a key motivator.

"Client needs often don't fit into a neat box. Whether it's a business opportunity like a potential acquisition, or whether it's a risk like a False Claims Act case, you need to bring together different areas of expertise in an integrated way to meet that challenge and achieve a client's outcome," Labson added.

On the transactional side, Covington corporate practice leader Catherine Dargan said that expertise has come to bear as attorneys have navigated unique deal structures, like the one at the center of the Novartis-Avidity transaction.

Under the deal, Novartis agreed to buy Avidity's late-stage RNA therapeutics for neuromuscular diseases. The deal valued Avidity at \$12 billion and is contingent on the spinoff of Avidity's early-stage precision cardiology programs into a separate company.

Announcing the agreement in October, Novartis said the separation will give one of Avidity's existing partners a right of first negotiation to buy the spun-off assets and entitle current Avidity stockholders to shares in the spun-off company or cash, if the assets are sold to a third party.

"You don't typically see acquisitions with all of those pieces to it, but in this case it was a great structure for the parties, and we're very focused on executing that now and bringing it to fruition," Dargan said. The merger is expected to close Friday, pending stockholder approval, according to Avidity.



A Texas federal judge's vacatur of a Food and Drug Administration final rule regulating lab-developed tests as medical devices marked another highlight for Covington life sciences attorneys last year.

In the order, U.S. District Judge Sean D. Jordan opined that the 2024 FDA rule waded into regulatory authority given to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by Congress and conflated physical tools used by laboratory professionals to deliver a service with test products created for commercial distribution.

The ruling came as a win for Covington client American Clinical Laboratory Association, which has worked with the firm for years to respond to attempts by the FDA to regulate lab-developed tests, Covington medical device industry group chair Scott Danzis told Law360. The FDA did not appeal the ruling.

With the rule's vacatur, there may be opportunities for pharmaceutical companies to more confidently use lab-developed tests in clinical trials and as companion diagnostics, Danzis said. As for laboratories, the ruling raises new strategic questions for those seeking to develop tests that could later be commercialized as kits, he added.

"There's lots of downstream implications of the ruling, and what's been fun for us is that, having been there for the whole journey, we're now sort of at the center of that storm," Danzis said.

Other practice achievements highlighted by the firm include its representation of Novo Nordisk in litigation challenging compounded versions of the drugmaker's blockbuster Wegovy and Ozempic weight loss drugs, its win for Johnson & Johnson at the Third Circuit in False Claims Act litigation over side effects from the company's antibiotic drug Levaquin, and a deferred prosecution agreement resolving criminal charges against client Kimberly-Clark over the company's former surgical gowns business.

Looking ahead, Covington practice leaders told Law360 they anticipate further collaboration between the life sciences and tech industries, ranging from the use of artificial intelligence in drug development to the commercialization of wearable digital health technology.

Acquisitions and licensing arrangements can facilitate those partnerships, Dargan said, noting she expects life sciences deal activity to continue at a robust rate in the year ahead.

"We certainly intend to play in that market," Dargan said.

The firm is also watching out for impacts from the Trump administration's most-favored nation drug-pricing initiatives and voluntary agreements between drug manufacturers and the White House. Labson said both developments raise regulatory questions, the potential for litigation and business considerations for licensing arrangements and other deals.

"We've been super active on those issues and will continue to be," Labson said. "Like some of the other areas we've talked about, it really requires an interdisciplinary team."

--Editing by Amy French.
