

## Rising Star: Gibson Dunn's Heather Richardson

*Law360, New York (July 31, 2017, 3:45 PM EDT)* – Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP's Heather Richardson has guided Aetna Inc. and other companies through massive victories, including winning the insurer nearly \$40 million in a fraud case against surgery centers, making her one of five health care law attorneys under 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### **WHAT DREW HER TO HEALTH CARE LAW:**

Richardson said she's been interested in health care since high school, where the topic entered her realm through a mix of debate and family insurance problems. That background allowed her to jump right into the field when she became a lawyer.

"I think it's an area of the law that is incredibly unique, because it has incredibly complex questions and issues that affect everyone," Richardson said. "They affect my public school teacher mother, they affect big business and large industries, so not only is it intellectually interesting and challenging, but it's also so important on a very broad social level."

### **HER BIGGEST CAREER MOMENT:**

Much of Richardson's prominent work has been on behalf of the insurer Aetna, including a trial earlier this year that relied on what she called a "novel theory of fraud." Aetna accused a network of surgical centers in California of charging the insurer incredibly high rates, telling out-of-network patients they only had to pay an in-network copay while charging the insurer the full amount and getting doctors to refer patients in exchange for a discounted investment in the network. A

**RISING**  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**STAR**



**Heather  
Richardson  
Gibson Dunn**

**Age:** 36

**Home base:** Los Angeles

**Position:** Partner

**Law school:** UCLA School of Law

**First job after law school:**  
Associate at Gibson Dunn

California jury in April granted Aetna \$37.4 million.

"This type of scheme is not uncommon but it's uncommon for insurance companies to pursue it as a kind of fraud," she said. "It was not only big in the sense that it went all the way through to trial and we were successful and got a verdict in our favor and an award of \$37.4 million, it was also novel in being in the vanguard for a type of case that is uncommon and is hopefully going to be a sentinel to prevent these kinds of bad behaviors."

In another case representing Aetna, Richardson helped secure a **settlement** from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan just before a \$2 billion trial began. This was an antitrust matter, ending in May 2015, in which Aetna said Blue Cross drove up prices for customers by entering into deals with hospitals dictating how much they would charge competing insurers. Gibson Dunn said this was one of the first cases to take on the legality of such most-favored-nation contracts.

**HER BIGGEST CHALLENGE:**

During her first years of being an attorney, Richardson took on a pro bono case involving eviction at a nursing home. It was an area of law she'd never covered before, but it proved to her that she can turn something that seems impossible into something possible.

"It was overwhelming to learn this area of the law I was very unfamiliar with, while also learning to be a lawyer. I learned there's no problem you can't solve if you have good help, good advice and you're willing to tackle it."

**HER ADVICE FOR YOUNG ATTORNEYS:**

"Do what you love, and do it to the best of your ability," Richardson said. That is "definitely the message I've gotten from my mentors and colleagues through my career," she added. "It's a distillation of things other people have told me."

— *As told to Dani Kass*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2017 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,200 submissions. This interview has been edited and condensed.*

All Content © 2003-2017, Portfolio Media, Inc.