

Rising Star: King & Spalding's Julia Romano

By **Mike Curley**

Law360 (October 4, 2019, 4:37 PM EDT) -- Julia Romano of King & Spalding LLP has scored victories for Johnson & Johnson in cases alleging its talcum powder causes mesothelioma, earning her a spot among five product liability law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

THE BIGGEST CASE OF HER CAREER:

Romano said she's been fortunate to be part of several large and challenging cases in her career, among them several first-of-their-kind trials, which come with their own unique challenges such as building a defense from the ground up.

"Not only are you in uncharted territory, often involving novel claims brought by some of the most prominent plaintiff lawyers in the country, but you're also really helping shape the future of the litigation," she said.

Among the bigger cases of that type, she said, was when she served on a trial team that won a defense verdict for Johnson & Johnson in the first suit over allegations that the company's talc powder causes mesothelioma.

The case, decided in California in 2017, was one of the biggest she has worked on, not only because it was the first of its kind, but also because California granted the case preference, meaning she only had 120 days to prepare for the trial.

"Having it be a first-of-its-kind trial and having only 120 days to work the case up and prepare the case for trial, you're combing through thousands of documents, you're learning new scientific and medical fields, you're finding experts — it's quite a whirlwind," she said. "All of that hard work ended up paying off, and we obtained a defense verdict for a great client."

RISING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ STAR



Julia Romano
King & Spalding

Age: 36

Home base: Los Angeles

Position: Partner

Law school: Southwestern Law School

First job after law school: Yukevich Calfo & Cavanaugh

HER PROUDEST MOMENT:

Romano said her proudest moment as an attorney was not with product liability law but in a pro bono case where she represented two transgender women from El Salvador as they sought asylum in the U.S., fleeing persecution and violence at the hands of government officials in their home country.

"Being able to obtain asylum and seeing the relief on their faces, knowing they were not going to be sent back to a country that didn't accept them was certainly a proud moment, and a very defining one so far in my career," she said.

Romano said she's always seen pro bono work as one of the key responsibilities of lawyers, to use the skills and education they've accumulated to contribute to society. She added pro bono work has always been very important to her, and as a partner at King & Spalding, she encourages the firm's associates to get involved, as well.

"It's not only rewarding, but you can really impact other people's lives, people who may not be able to afford representation," she said. "It's also a really great way to gain experience you might not otherwise have, and also to learn about different fields that you might otherwise not be exposed to."

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

The challenging and competitive nature of her work and obtaining results for her clients are among the things that keep Romano going, she said, adding she feels lucky to have great clients to represent.

Her personal and professional support systems, including her family, friends, mentors and colleagues at King & Spalding, also contribute, she added, saying they make coming to work a great experience.

"When you do what you love, for clients you believe in, with an incredible team, it's easy to stay motivated," she said. "I just want to obtain the best possible results for my clients, whether in the product space or, for example, in my pro bono work, as well."

WHY SHE'S A PRODUCT LIABILITY ATTORNEY:

Romano said she knew she wanted to be a litigator and trial attorney in law school, but she "fell into" her current line of work after an internship in her third year of law school with a product liability firm in Los Angeles.

After graduating, she became an associate with the firm and cut her teeth on products work, and has since grown to love it, as well as the new opportunities each case brings.

With the talc cases, she said, she was unfamiliar with geology and mineralogy before working on the suits, and became a subject matter expert as she worked the case. In another case, while representing an offroad vehicle manufacturer, she said she went on a snowmobile with a test rider, who taught her its safety features and how to drive it, which she called a fun and rewarding experience.

"I just find it so fascinating, because each product, each litigation brings with it all sorts of new issues, challenges, and really, opportunities to expand my knowledge base into a variety of other fields and disciplines that you might not otherwise have any reason to study," she said.

— As told to Mike Curley

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of

Law360 editors selected the 2019 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,300 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 years old as of April 30, 2019, in order to be considered for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.