

The Deadly Counterfeit Drug Trade Thrives in Arizona

Maricopa County:
32 people died after
taking fentanyl-laced
oxycodone pills


Tempe: DEA and
police seized
30,000 counterfeit
oxycodone pills

Amado: More than 4
pounds of fentanyl and
oxycodone pills seized

The country has seen an upsurge in counterfeit prescription pills masquerading as painkillers and Xanax. These pills are disguised as real medications but made with deadly fentanyl or its even deadlier variants, and **even a fraction of a single pill can mean death in less than 30 minutes of ingesting it.**

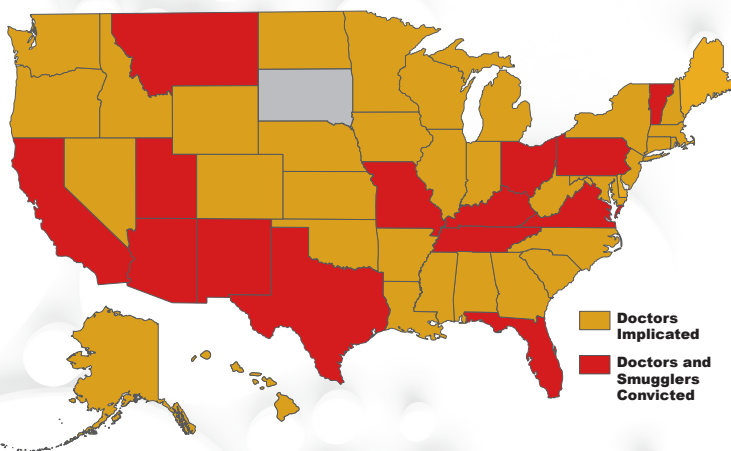
Fentanyl is a serious threat to Arizonans. **In just August 2017, Arizona law enforcement seized 33,500 counterfeit fentanyl-laced pills.** Between May 2015 and February 2017, 32 people died after taking pills like these in Maricopa County alone.

Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Arizona as well. 107 different medical practices in Arizona have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies.

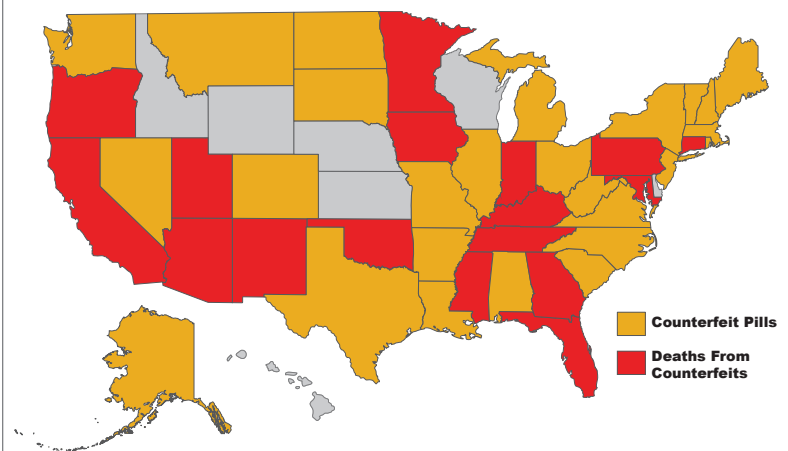
Families of patients like Betty Hunter, a Chandler resident who died shortly after being treated with counterfeit Avastin in 2011, will never be sure whether their loved one's lives were cut short by fake medicines. 

**Opening the U.S.'s closed drug supply chain puts
Arizonan lives at risk of serious injury or death.**

Fake Cancer Drug Crisis



Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths



Counterfeit and Black Market Drug Investigations in Arizona (2010–2018)

Based on reported investigations.

Note that each investigation could have affected hundreds of Arizona residents.

Fentanyl and Counterfeit Pills Containing Fentanyl

- January 2018:** U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents in Amado arrested two Phoenix women carrying more than 4 pounds of fentanyl and oxycodone pills.¹
- October 2017:** A Yavapai County Sheriff's Office K9 deputy arrested 19-year-old Manuel Anthony Villa during a traffic stop after finding approximately 182 blue round oxycodone tablets which resembled fentanyl-laced pills they had seen before.² Tests showed the pills were primarily made of fentanyl.
- August 2017:** The DEA and Tempe Police Department seized 30,000 counterfeit oxycodone pills that contained fentanyl at a traffic stop.³ In separate incidents, 26-year-old Jesus Madueno was arrested for selling 3,500 counterfeit pills to undercover detectives, and a woman was arrested for trying to smuggle 67 pounds of meth and 8 pounds of fentanyl over the border at Nogales.⁴
- March 2017:** The Drug Enforcement Administration announced that counterfeit oxycodone pills laced with fentanyl were responsible for the overdose deaths of 32 people in Maricopa County alone between September 2015 and February 2017.⁵
- October 2016:** Lt. James Scott, Deputy Commander of the Counter Narcotics Alliance, warned that authorities had discovered multiple cases of counterfeit pills containing fentanyl: "They're popping up all over town now. They look just like regular morphine pills or oxycodone pills."⁶
- June 2016:** Police in Tucson, AZ who were performing a welfare check discovered a dead person and counterfeit 30mg oxycodone that contained fentanyl and fillers.⁷

Black Market and Counterfeit Cancer Drugs

- April 2015:** The FDA warned 16 Arizona medical practices and more than 270 nationwide to stop buying drugs from Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA approved medications.⁸
- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, 23 in Arizona, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.⁹
- May 2011:** Chandler resident Betty Hunter had an extreme adverse reaction to an infusion of Avastin she was given for lung cancer. Later, investigators discovered that the medicine she was treated with, which had been illegally imported from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiaries, had no active ingredient. Chandler died of lung cancer in August 2011.¹⁰ In 2012 and 2013, the FDA warned 17 additional Arizona doctors offices and more than 500 across the country to stop buying from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiaries that had sold American doctors counterfeit Avastin.¹¹
- August 2010:** Canadian Hazim Gaber was sentenced to 33 months in prison for selling a counterfeit of the experimental cancer drug sodium dichloroacetate to at least 65 cancer patients in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands.¹²

Misbranded and Counterfeit Botox

- March 2016:** The FDA warned 43 Arizona doctors and more than 1,200 nationwide to stop buying from Canadian distributor TC Medical, which sold 22 different kinds of non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Botox.¹³

Other Drugs

- June 2016:** Authorities shut down 23 yerberias in Phoenix, Chandler and Mesa, AZ that were selling counterfeit medicine which contained dangerous chemicals, including arsenic, boric acid and industrial solvents. Drugs purchased at some yerberias have caused problems including kidney failure, developmental defects and death.¹⁴

Footnotes

1. "2 Phoenix Women Arrested With Fentanyl At I-19 Checkpoint Near Amado," *Tucson.com*, January 10, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2DDPFfV>.
2. "Recent K9 Investigations Lead To Drug Busts," *Verde Independent*, November 25, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2Dwj8lJ>.
3. "Authorities seize 30,000 Counterfeit Pain Pills In Arizona," *Tucson News Now*, August 17, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2F5pa9f>.
4. BrieAnna J. Frank, "Man Accused Of Selling Fake Oxycodone Laced With Highly Toxic Fentanyl," *The Arizona Republic*, September 6, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2BjwIZv> and Donald Jordan, "Meth & Fentanyl Border Bust," *KVOA Tucson*, August 2, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2DLGunQ>.
5. "32 Deaths In Metro Phoenix Attributed To Fake Oxy Pills," *Phoenix 3TV/CBS 5*, March 21, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2n4yiob>.
6. Lily Altavena, "Powerful Synthetic Opioid Fentanyl Makes A Deadly Mark In Arizona," *Cronkite News*, October 7, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2DBlOhi>.
7. Michael Cooper, "Deadly counterfeit pills seized in Tucson," *Tucson News Now*, June 14, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2rwtVn2>.
8. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit or Unapproved Prescription Drugs," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last updated August 17, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.
9. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit or Unapproved Prescription Drugs, 2012-2014," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last updated June 12, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
10. Jeanne Whalen, "Turkish Drug Exporter Ozay Draws U.S. Scrutiny," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 7, 2014, <http://on.wsj.com/2DAzKsM>.
11. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
12. "Canadian Man Sentenced to 33 Months in Prison for Selling Counterfeit Cancer Drugs Using the Internet," U.S. Department of Justice, August 25, 2010, <http://bit.ly/2ruLEP9>.
13. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased...", <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.
14. Adrian Hedden, "Police warn of counterfeit medication trend in Latino communities," *The Arizona Republic*, June 16, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2FiKJb2>.