The Deadly Counterfeit Drug Trade Thrives in Iowa

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 Iowans. In August 2017, three people were found unresponsive at a gas station in Council Bluffs and a fourth was found at a house not far away 30 minutes later. Two additional overdoses followed just days later. The police believed fentanyl caused all of these overdoses. Diligent emergency medical workers revived everyone, but a month later, one of the victims described his suffering: lung and kidney failure, blood clots, memory loss and hospitalization for more than a week.

9 Iowa Doctors Linked to Fake Drug Rings

Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Iowa as well. Nine different medical practices in Iowa have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their loved ones were given real medication or fake, and if they died from a lack of treatment.

Opening the U.S.’s closed drug supply chain puts Iowan lives at risk of serious injury or death.

Fake Cancer Drug Crisis

Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths

Polk County, November 2017: Officials reported on six overdose deaths caused by carfentanil

Council Bluffs, August 2017: In less than one week, six people overdosed on fentanyl.

Based on reported investigations. Note that each investigation could have affected hundreds of Iowa residents.

**Fentanyl, Carfentanil, and Counterfeit Pills Made with Fentanyl**

**November 2017:** Carfentanil, a drug 10,000 times more powerful than morphine, arrived in Iowa. Polk County Officials reported six deaths from carfentanil overdoses.¹

**September 2017:** An Iowa fentanyl overdose survivor, who was one of four people that overdosed in Council Bluffs, described the continuing health problems he suffers as a result.²

**August 2017:** A total of six fentanyl overdoses in the Council Bluffs area were reported in a single week, including four reported on August 3rd.³

**July 2017:** The director of Iowa Poison Control Center warned that counterfeit pills containing fentanyl had entered from the east and were migrating across the state.⁴

**July 2017:** The Iowa Department of Public Health warned that a second batch of fake oxycodone pills, this time containing fentanyl and u-4770, were found in the state.⁵

**Black Market and Counterfeit Cancer Drugs**

**November 2016:** An Iowa cancer clinic and oncologist were required to pay more than $176,000 in fines to settle False Claims Act allegations. Hematology and Oncology Center of Iowa purchased medication from convicted counterfeit drug distributor, Medical Device King.⁶

**March 2016:** Four Iowa doctors, Mark O. Carlson, of Siouxland Adult Medicine Clinic, John Hoffman of Orthopaedic Specialists, Val O. Lyons of Pharmacy Medical Associates, and Ellen Shepler of Pharmacy Medical Associates, were among more than 1,227 doctors nationwide who received warning letters from the FDA to stop buying infusion drugs from TC Medical Group, which sold more than $33 million worth of non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Botox.⁷

**May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, including three Iowa doctors offices, Hematology & Oncology Center of Iowa, Metro Anesthesia & Pain Management, and The Dental Center, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.⁸

**2012–2013:** The FDA warned two Iowa medical practices, Mona Alqulali of Infinity Medical Group and Medical Associates of Clinton, Iowa, and more than 500 across the country to stop buying from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiaries that had sold American doctors counterfeit Avastin.⁹

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