

# The Deadly Counterfeit Drug Trade Thrives in Texas

**Houston, May 2017:**  
**250,000 lethal doses**  
**of raw fentanyl and 10**  
**kilos of fentanyl-laced**  
**counterfeit oxycodone**  
**pills found.**

**Amarillo, June 2017:**  
**Locals hospitalized after**  
**taking contaminated**  
**Xanax pills**

**Pasadena, May 2017:**  
**8 kilos of fentanyl**  
**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 Texans. In 2017, after San Antonio police had been seeing fake pills for 2 years, the DEA shut down a San Antonio and Houston-based trafficking operation, **seizing pill presses, raw fentanyl, 10 kilograms of fentanyl-laced oxycodone pills, and 11 kilograms of fake Xanax and Adderall laced with methamphetamine.**

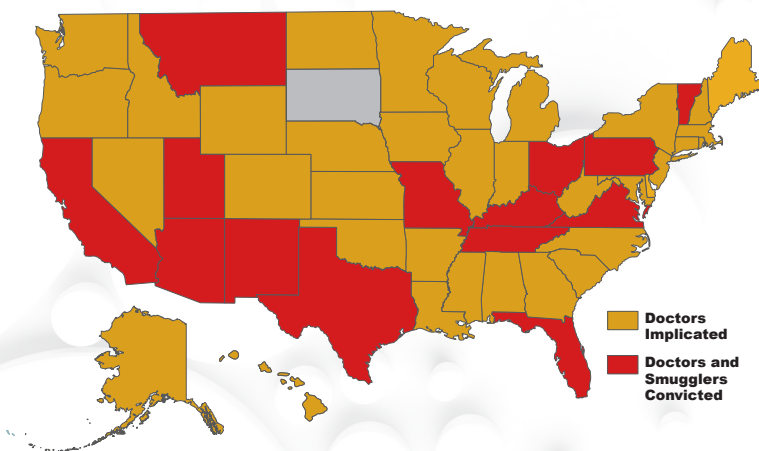
## Texans have suffered because of counterfeit medical treatments.

243 different medical practices in Texas have been implicated in buying from black market distributors that sold 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.

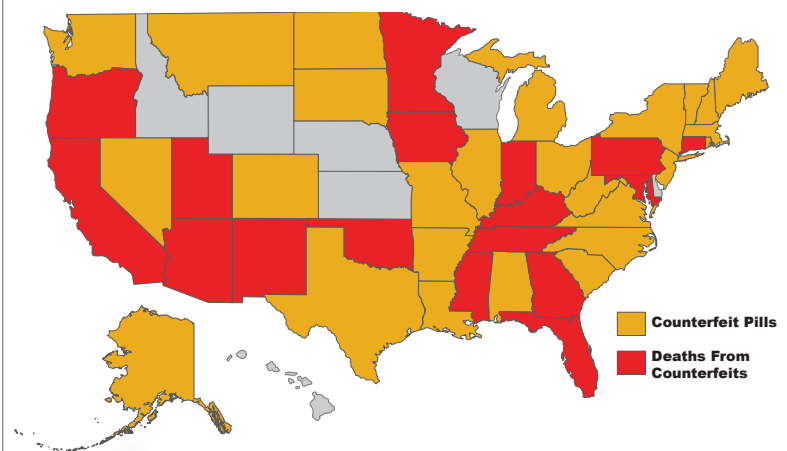
Texas has been the site of five major counterfeit drug prosecutions, convicting criminals who sold counterfeit imported Xanax, Valium, sibutramine, Cialis, Viagra, Stilnox and Alli. 

## Opening the U.S.'s closed drug supply chain puts Texans at risk of serious injury or death.

**Fake Cancer Drug Crisis**



**Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths**



# Counterfeit and Black Market Drug Investigations in Texas (2010–2017)

**Based on reported investigations.**

**Note that each investigation could have affected hundreds of Texas residents.**

## Counterfeit Pills Containing Fentanyl

- August 2017:** Authorities charged eight people in San Antonio and Houston for running a counterfeit pill operation that filled hundreds of thousands of internet orders and may have caused several overdose deaths. In an earlier law enforcement action in May, law enforcement seized half a kilogram of powdered fentanyl, 10 kilos of oxycodone pills laced with fentanyl, half a kilo of crystal methamphetamine, 5 kilos of adderall pills laced with meth, 6 kilos of Xanax pills laced with meth, and four commercial pill press machines.<sup>1</sup>
- June 2017:** The Amarillo Police Department reported that Amarillo residents had been hospitalized after taking Xanax pills that may have been contaminated with fentanyl.<sup>2</sup> The Burleson Police Department seized 520 grams of carfentanil from Fort Worth resident Brady Wirth Gaisser, who was allegedly operating a carfentanil processing lab.<sup>3</sup>
- May 2017:** Pasadena police seized 8 kilograms of fentanyl. In July, Houston law enforcement seized an additional 11 kilograms.<sup>4</sup>
- August 2016:** Houston Forensic Science Center reported that it had found fentanyl in counterfeit prescription pills and powders ten times over the course of 2016.<sup>5</sup>

## Black Market and Counterfeit Cancer Drugs

- April 2015:** The FDA warned 31 Texas medical practices and more than 270 nationwide to stop buying drugs from Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA approved medications.<sup>6</sup>
- December 2013:** Laredo physician Dr. Eduardo Miranda pleaded guilty to charges related to ordering non-FDA approved cancer drugs from a subsidiary of CanadaDrugs.com.<sup>7</sup> In April 2015, Corpus Christi oncologist Dr. Mohamed Ayman Ghraoui, too, pleaded guilty to such charges. He purchased more than \$900,000 in non-FDA approved cancer drugs from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiary Montana Healthcare Solutions.<sup>8</sup> In 2012 and 2013, the FDA warned 25 Texas doctors offices and more than 500 across the country to stop buying from these subsidiaries, which had sold American doctors counterfeit Avastin.<sup>9</sup>
- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, 80 in Texas, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.<sup>10</sup>

## Misbranded and Counterfeit Botox

- March 2016:** The FDA warned 83 Texas 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.<sup>11</sup>
- July 2013:** The FDA warned 24 Texas practitioners (233 across the country) to stop buying fraudulent Botox in July 2013.<sup>12</sup>
- March 2010:** Dr. Gayle Rothenberg of Houston pleaded guilty to charges related to injecting 170 patients who believed they were being receiving an FDA-approved Botox with a black market version of the drug.<sup>13</sup>

## Other Drugs

- June 2017:** Houston resident Carolina Aguilar Rodriguez was indicted for smuggling a counterfeit corticosteroid into the U.S. from El Salvador, and selling it via an unlicensed pharmacy to undercover federal agents.<sup>14</sup> Houston doctor George Patino was convicted of smuggling non-FDA approved human growth hormone from Mexico and reselling it illegally to a St. Louis, MO doctor and local bodybuilders.<sup>15</sup>
- February 2015:** Wykesha Reid died after receiving black market buttock enhancing injections made of industrial-grade silicone at a salon in Dallas.<sup>16</sup> Her death mirrors that of Hidalgo resident Zenyasent Cisneros, who died after a similar procedure in October 2013.<sup>17</sup> Since 2010, other deaths have been reported in Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.<sup>18</sup>
- October 2014:** Three Texan conspirators were charged with smuggling 106,000 counterfeit prescription pills from China to Texas.<sup>19</sup> The pills, which included Xanax, Valium, sibutramine, Cialis, Viagra and Stilnox (which is sold as Ambien in the U.S.), were tested and found to be subpotent or to contain different active ingredients from their FDA-approved versions. They pleaded guilty in 2015 and 2016.<sup>20</sup>

- January 2014:** Houston resident Mohammad Jamal Rashid pleaded guilty to charges related to importing over 7,000 doses of imported counterfeit and misbranded ED medications to his home.<sup>21</sup>
- August 2011:** Women's Integrated Healthcare of Grapevine settled a lawsuit with the state of Texas related to implanting imported, non-FDA approved IUDs in their patients.<sup>22</sup>
- May 2011:** Texas launched an investigation after an Austin hospital reported treating several children who were given over-the-counter drugs falsely packaged and advertised as antibiotics.<sup>23</sup>
- January 2011:** Shengyang Zhou, whose website, [www.2daydietshopping.com](http://www.2daydietshopping.com), indicated that his business operated out of Plano, Texas, pleaded guilty to trafficking in counterfeit versions of the weight loss drug, Alli. One of Zhou's customers, a Texas emergency room doctor, suffered a stroke after taking his products.<sup>24</sup>
- November 2010:** Kum Leung Chow was sentenced to 12 months in prison for selling counterfeit Viagra and Cialis on two internet websites.<sup>25</sup>
- September 2010:** En Wang, the owner of Houston-based Jiao Long USAO Inc., was convicted of trafficking imported, counterfeit Viagra that contained sheetrock into the U.S.<sup>26</sup>

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