

# The Deadly Counterfeit Drug Trade Thrives in Nevada

**Washoe County, May 2016:**  
**Law enforcement received multiple reports of counterfeit oxycodone pills believed to be made with fentanyl**

**Opioid-related hospitalizations increased 150% between 2013 and 2015**

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.

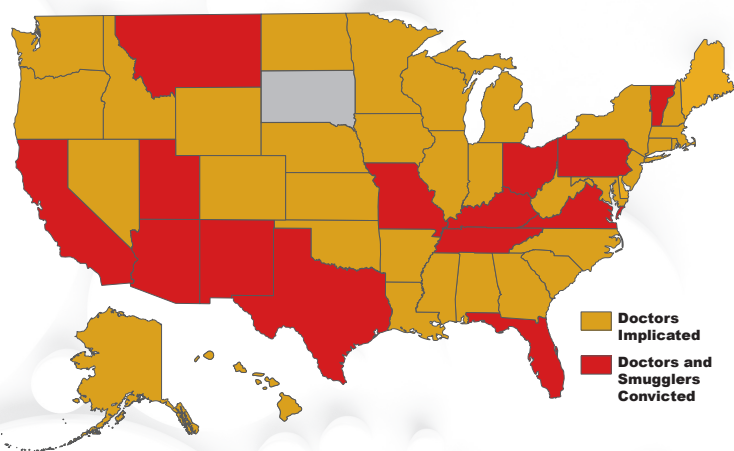
Fentanyl is a serious threat to Nevada. **Multiple reports of counterfeit oxycodone pills came from various sources in Washoe County in May 2016.** One person who was unfortunate enough to take one of the pills described how he felt after he was revived by paramedics: "...when I came to I thought I had been in a car accident, I thought I had been hit by a car."

## 35 Nevada Doctors Linked to Fake Drug Rings

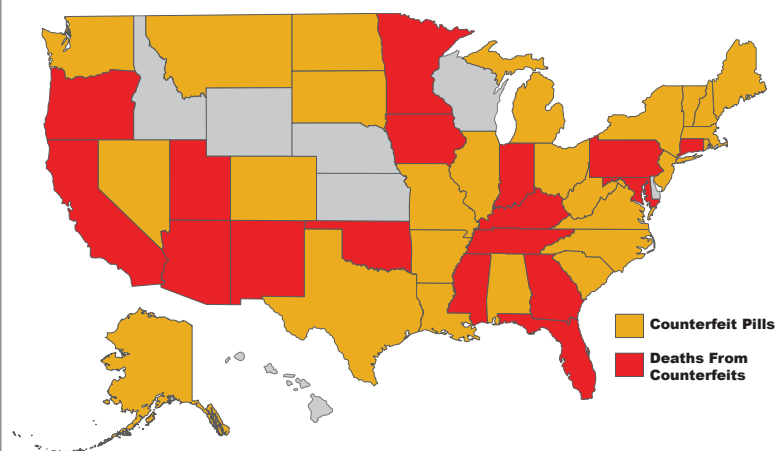
Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Nevada as well. 35 different medical practices in Nevada have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their loved ones were given real medication or fake, and if they died from a lack of treatment.

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

**Fake Cancer Drug Crisis**



**Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths**



# Counterfeit and Black Market Drug Investigations in Nevada (2009–2017)

**Based on reported investigations.**

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

## Fentanyl and Counterfeit Pills Made with Fentanyl

**May 2017:** Data from the state's health department indicated that opioid-related hospitalizations increased 150% from 2013 to 2015.<sup>1</sup>

**May 2016:** Counterfeit oxycodone pills were reported multiple times in Washoe County.<sup>2</sup>

## Black Market and Counterfeit Cancer Drugs

**April 2015:** The FDA warned five Nevada medical practices and more than 270 nationwide to stop buying drugs from Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA approved medications.<sup>3</sup>

**2012–2013:** The FDA warned seven Nevada doctors offices and more than 500 across the country to stop buying from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiaries that sold American doctors counterfeit Avastin.<sup>4</sup>

**May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, nine in Nevada, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.<sup>5</sup>

## Misbranded and Counterfeit Botox

**March 2016:** The FDA warned 11 Nevada 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>6</sup>

**July 2013:** The FDA sent letters to three Nevada practitioners (233 across the country) warning them about buying fraudulent Botox in July 2013.<sup>7</sup>

**March 2009:** A Las Vegas doctor and his wife were sentenced to federal prison for injecting clients with non FDA-approved Botox that was labeled "For research purposes only, not for human use."<sup>8</sup>

## Other Drugs

**January 2017:** Dmitriy V. Melnik, the owner of Las Vegas-based Candy Color Lenses, was sentenced to 46 months for selling tens of thousands of customers counterfeit and misbranded contact lenses, some of which were contaminated with bacteria, from suppliers in Asia.<sup>9</sup>

**September 2014:** Las Vegas pharmacologist Balbir Bhogal was indicted on multiple accounts related to trafficking in counterfeit drugs and importing and distributing controlled substances and misbranded drugs.<sup>10</sup> Bhogal, who was supplying the pills to an illegal Internet pharmacy based in Costa Rica that catered to U.S. customers, was sentenced to three years probation and to forfeit \$15,705 in October 2016.<sup>11</sup>

**April 2011:** A Las Vegas resident died after an unlicensed doctor injected her with a gel during a buttocks enhancement procedure.<sup>12</sup>

1. Alison Noon, "Governor's Plan to Track Opioid Abuse in Real Time Advances," *U.S. News and World Report*, May 27, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2HtHtQn>.

2. Paul Harris, "Dangerous Pills Showing Up in Washoe County," *KOLO 8*, May 13, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2GZEOE5>.

3. "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>.

4. "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>.

5. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased..." <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.

6. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased..." <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.

7. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased..." <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.

8. "March 30, 2009: Las Vegas Doctor and Wife Sentenced to Prison for Botox Fraud Scheme," U.S. Department of Justice, March 30, 2009, <http://bit.ly/2FjW1Mp>.

9. "Owner Of Major Online Colored Contact Lens Business Sentenced to 46 Months in Prison in Largest-Ever Scheme to Import and Sell Counterfeit and Misbranded Contact Lenses Prosecuted in the United States," U.S. Department of Justice, January 18, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2Em5Cl7>.

10. "Wisconsin Pharmacist And Nevada Pharmacologist Charged With Smuggling Counterfeit Pharmaceuticals Using A Costa Rican Internet Pharmacy," U.S. Department of Justice, September 12, 2014, <http://bit.ly/2ENSfQr>.

11. Judgment, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York, Case 1:14-cr-00374-JFB, <http://bit.ly/2EooNrl>; and Order of Forfeiture, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York, Case 1:14-cr-00374-JFB, <http://bit.ly/2EkyCtH>.

12. "Las Vegas Woman Dies After Backroom Buttocks Enhancement Surgery," *Fox News*, April 12, 2011, <http://fxn.ws/2ncA7tH>.