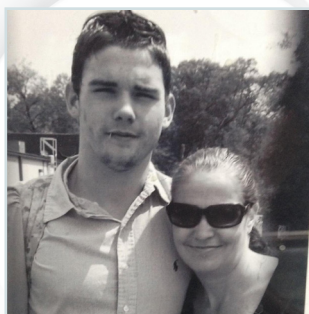


Counterfeit Pill Made With Fentanyl Killed Young Father-To-Be



Joe Patterson and Lisa Hicks

Before he died of a fentanyl overdose on February 16, 2015, 23-year-old Joe Patterson had a lot to look forward to.

The Georgia resident worked for Sherwin-Williams while he pursued a degree in exercise science. He aspired to be a personal trainer because of his devotion to physical fitness.

He and his girlfriend were

looking forward to the birth of their first child in April 2015. They had even picked out their son's name: Gabriel.

On the weekend of Valentine's Day, Joe pulled a muscle during a workout. Rather than spend a lot of time and money going to a doctor for painkillers, Joe called a friend, Casey Trichel, to ask if he could buy a couple of oxycodone. He met up with Casey, made his purchase, and went on with his evening's plans.

Later that night, Casey sampled half of a tablet of the oxycodone he'd sold. He quickly realized that something was wrong. He tried desperately to contact Joe—even calling Joe's mother, Lisa Hicks—in an attempt to warn Joe, but it was too late.

After the call, Joe's mom anxiously tried to get in touch with her son, without success. In the morning, Joe's stepfather,

Julian, called her at work to tell her that he had been contacted and that something was wrong with Joe. When they got to the cousin's house in Gainesville, Georgia, Joe was already dead.

As the investigation unfolded, Hicks learned that Joe had died of a massive fentanyl overdose. Even worse, Joe might have survived if the three people at his cousin's house had not panicked and failed to call 911.

Casey pleaded guilty to distribution of fentanyl and involuntary manslaughter and was sentenced to 15 years in prison in December 2015. Joe's case was the first fentanyl murder prosecution in the state of Georgia. Since Joe's death, Hicks has been busy. Her grandson was born on April 9, 2015. She and her husband are raising the child, who she has named Joseph Gabriel Patterson, adding his father's name to the name her son had already chosen. Working with another bereaved parent on FentanylGeorgia.com, she has been steadily raising awareness about fentanyl overdose victims in an effort to honor the dead and save lives. She's also pushing hard for Joe's Law, a bill in the Georgia state legislature that would both increase penalties for people dealing these dangerous drugs, and enable prosecution of people who stand by overdose victims without offering help. Through all this, Joe is always on Hicks' mind. "I have Joe's photo on my desk with a plaque below it," she told us. "It says that if love could have saved you, you would have lived forever." ■

42 States Have a Deadly Fentanyl Problem

What is in these fake pills?

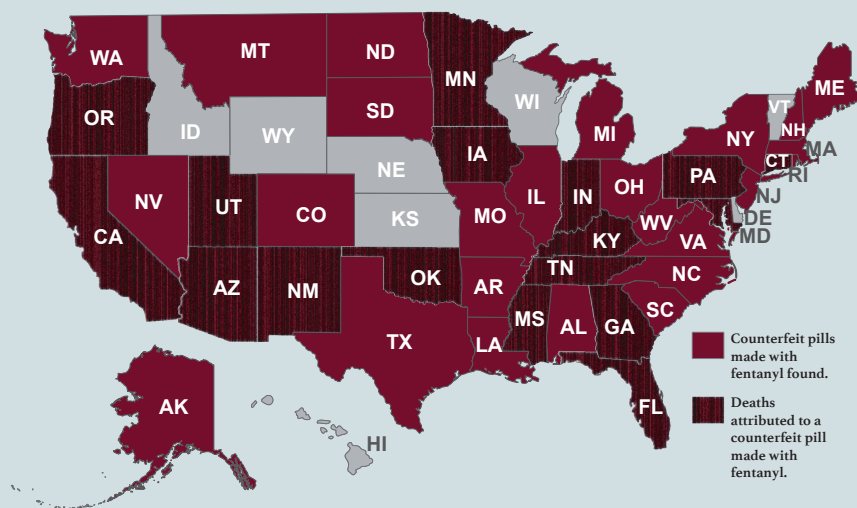
Pills that look like prescription painkillers, anti-anxiety meds and even aspirin have all been found. They contain deadly doses of fentanyl or related analogues sourced from illegal labs overseas.

Where do they come from?

Mexican cartels and rogue Chinese manufacturers make finished pills which are then smuggled and mailed into the U.S. Illicit Chinese chemical companies also mail raw fentanyl and pill presses to ambitious U.S. drug dealers who then use them to make counterfeit prescription medication.

When did the epidemic start?

Cartels and dealers first mixed fentanyl into heroin in the 1990s, but the first reports of fake prescription medications made with fentanyl came in 2014.



Read the original full report, "40 States and Counting: The Deadly Combination of Imported Fentanyl and Counterfeit Medicines" at <http://safedrug/40states>