

# THE DEADLY COUNTERFEIT DRUG TRADE THRIVES IN MONTANA

**2012–2013: Five doctors' offices in Big Sky Country received warning letters to stop purchasing medicine from unlicensed wholesalers that sold fake cancer medication.**

**January 2019: Two people in Billings and one in Helena died in a one-week period after taking fake fentanyl pills.**

## 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.

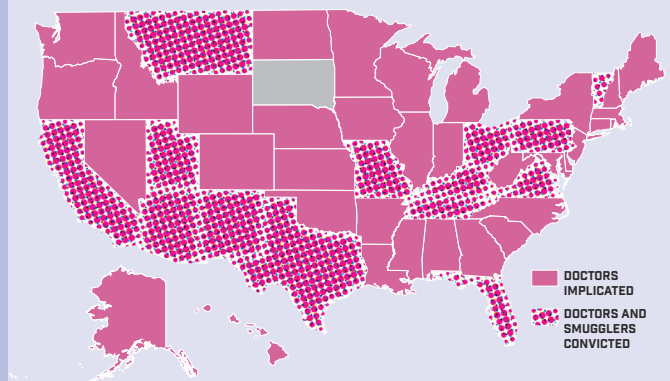
Fentanyl is a serious threat in Montana. Authorities have reported fentanyl overdoses in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Helena, and the Rocky Boy's Reservation. They have seized fentanyl-laced pills in Billings, Butte, and on the Rocky Boy's Reservation.

## EIGHT MONTANA DOCTORS LINKED TO FAKE DRUG RINGS

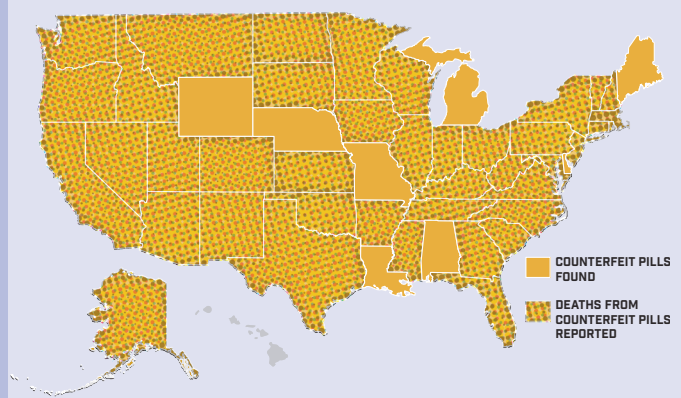
Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Montana as well. Eight different medical practices in Montana have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their loved ones 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 MONTANA LIVES AT RISK OF SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH.

**Fake Cancer Drug Crisis**



**Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths**



# COUNTERFEIT AND BLACK MARKET DRUG INVESTIGATIONS IN MONTANA (2012–2020)



BASED ON REPORTED INVESTIGATIONS.

NOTE THAT EACH INVESTIGATION COULD HAVE AFFECTED HUNDREDS OF MONTANA RESIDENTS.

## FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS CONTAINING FENTANYL

- March 2020:** Federal authorities filed charges against a man in Missoula who allegedly trafficked drugs, including fake oxycodone pills made with fentanyl, from Mexico all the way to the Butte area.<sup>1</sup>
- February 2019:** Police warned the residents of Missoula to be on the lookout for counterfeit fentanyl pills.<sup>2</sup>
- January 2019:** In one week, three people in Billings and one in Helena died after taking fake pills laced with fentanyl.<sup>3</sup>
- April 2018:** Police charged two individuals in Billings after the pair repeatedly sold pills to an undercover agent. Pills sold at one of the controlled buys were counterfeit oxycodone made with fentanyl.<sup>4</sup>
- December 2017:** Five Chippewa Cree tribe members on the Rocky Boy Reservation suffered near fatal overdoses after taking counterfeit pills that contained a mixture of fentanyl, heroin and other opioids.<sup>5</sup>
- October 2017:** Billings police seized approximately 100 counterfeit oxycodone pills made of fentanyl while arresting an alleged dealer who had sold fake pills to an informant.<sup>6</sup>
- September 2017:** Bozeman police warned that seven residents of Gallatin County had overdosed over a two week period, and that they suspected that fentanyl was to blame.<sup>7</sup> Lewis and Clark County's sheriff issued a similar warning in November 2017.<sup>8</sup>
- July 2017:** Investigators arrested Charles Petty, Sarah Stoner and Teran Smith in Bozeman for allegedly distributing a heroin-fentanyl mixture connected with at least four overdoses in Butte.<sup>9</sup> All three defendants had pleaded guilty by November 2017.<sup>10</sup>
- November 2016:** A federal indictment alleges that the Utah-based drug trafficker Aaron Shamo shipped 80 deadly counterfeit oxycodone pills to Montana over a two-day period. Shamo, who was found with 95,000 counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl on November 22, shipped his products to 24 states over those two days.<sup>11</sup>

## BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, three in Montana, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.<sup>12</sup>
- February 2012:** The FDA found that Montana resident Paul Bottomley had sold counterfeit Avastin that had no active ingredient to American oncologists through his company, Montana Healthcare Solutions (MHCS). He pleaded guilty to distributing the counterfeit cancer medication in March 2013, and was sentenced to five years probation, six months home confinement and a forfeiture of \$6 million in profits. Bottomley sold MHCS to a subsidiary of CanadaDrugs.com in 2010.<sup>13</sup> In 2012 and 2013, the FDA warned more than 500 medical practices across the country—two in Montana—to stop buying from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiaries that had sold American doctors counterfeit Avastin.<sup>14</sup>

## MISBRANDED AND COUNTERFEIT BOTOX

- March 2016:** The FDA warned three Montana 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>15</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

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3. Thomas Plank, "4 Died in Montana Due to Fentanyl Disguised as Less-dangerous Drugs," *Helena Independent Record*, January 31, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2V7krin>.
4. "Billings Police Arrest 2 People for Selling Drugs Out of Downtown Apartment," *KTVQ*, April 13, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2xsRCUo>.
5. Letter from Harlan Baker, Chairman of the Chippewa Cree Tribe, to Montana Senator Steve Daines, December 13, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2BO9FAB>.
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7. Kolby Crossley, "Bozeman Police Send Out Warning For Uptick in Opioid Use, Specifically Fentanyl," *KURL 8*, September 12, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2K7PEf8>.
8. Dennis Carlson, "Rise of Drug Overdoses Linked to Synthetic Painkiller," *KXLH*, November 11, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2VsX7uq>.
9. Whitney Berme, "Three Accused of Dealing Drug Linked to Overdoses in Butte," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, July 21, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2DRqY5H>.
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12. "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 July 2, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
13. "Paul Daniel Bottomley Sentenced In U.S. District Court," U.S. Department of Justice, July 12, 2013, <http://bit.ly/2Gdos8n>.
14. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
15. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit or Unapproved Prescription Drugs," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last updated July 3, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.