

# **It doesn't matter how cheap medicine is if it's counterfeit. Black market medication makes patients suffer twice: it steals your money and your health.**



Lack of effective treatment for an HIV patient is a potential death sentence. Medicines contaminated with other diseases, expired or poorly refrigerated drugs that have lost potency and pills pressed to look authentic but that contain no or wrong ingredients are all ways patients have suffered at the hands of greedy black marketers.

**Counterfeit medicines have been found with too little active ingredient, the wrong active ingredients or no active ingredients, all of which can have devastating consequences on the immune system.** Strict adherence to prescribed medications is necessary to keep HIV from reproducing billions of times in just one day. Every time the virus replicates itself, the risk of mutations increases, rendering medications less effective, and eventually ineffective.

Diverted drugs are sold from patients back into black marketer hands. Serums can be partially

used and refilled with saline, making them both contaminated and diluted drugs. Pills can be expired and stored improperly, making them ineffective. Counterfeit and diverted drugs may lead to ineffective treatment and increased viral loads risking HIV transmission. Unsterile resold injectable drugs may spread a second bloodborne infection, like hepatitis C (HCV). Having HIV and HCV at the same time may cause chronic HCV to progress more rapidly.

America's closed, secure drug supply chain brings life-saving medicines that allow patients to live long, full lives. However, criminals take advantage of the HIV/AIDS patient community by selling substandard or counterfeit drugs. With antiretroviral therapy (ART), people with HIV can expect to live for on average four decades after diagnosis. Black market drugs do not constrain virus replication and mutation, so they deny patients proper care.

**Only FDA-approved medicines from a licensed pharmacist are guaranteed to provide the consistent dosages needed to keep you healthy.**



In 2000, two different batches of fake Serostim were found in the U.S. One batch contained just one-sixteenth the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API). The second batch switched out the API for human corticotropin, the synthetic form of a hormone not used in the treatment of HIV. One unlucky patient, **Rick Roberts**, managed to get counterfeits from both batches. He and his doctor agonized for months not knowing what he had been injecting into himself on a daily basis and how that might affect the management of his HIV. The fake Serostim was found in California, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Florida, and Missouri.



**Criminals operating as unlicensed wholesalers have acquired medications and HIV/Hepatitis C testing kits from the black market, repackaged them and resold them to American pharmacies and patients.**

**Since 2006, 100 individuals have been charged with the distribution of black market medications prescribed to patients with HIV or AIDS. As of July 2018, 64 have pleaded guilty or been convicted in a jury trial.**

### **Prominent prosecutions of HIV/AIDS drugs counterfeiters:**

**TENNESSEE:** In July of 2018, Jerrod Nichols Smith received a 15-year sentence and forfeited \$1.4 million for running a \$50 million black market drug scheme that shipped tainted HIV/AIDS medications to independent pharmacies around the country. Conspirators purchased drugs from unlicensed suppliers and repackaged them in a warehouse in Nashville, TN. **Pharmacies reported finding prescription drug bottles that contained foreign objects, the wrong medicine or had the wrong dosage information.**

**NEW YORK:** A jury convicted pharmacist Ira Gross in August 2016 for his role in the sale of more than \$274 million of black market HIV medications. Pharmacists Glenn Schabel and Harry Abolafia had already pleaded guilty for their roles in the scheme. **All of the pills were obtained through illegal means and posed a serious health risk because of their unknown origin and quality.** They may have been counterfeit, expired, not stored properly, or mislabeled. Gross received an eight to 24-year prison sentence and was ordered to pay \$25 million in restitution. Schabel received a two and one-third to seven-year prison sentence and was ordered to forfeit \$5,456,267 to the New York State Medicaid Program. Abolafia received a 90-day sentence and was ordered to forfeit \$375,000.