The Deadly Counterfeit Drug Trade Thrives in Rhode Island

Six Rhode Island Doctors Linked to Fake Drug Rings

Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Rhode Island as well. Six different medical practices in Rhode Island 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 Rhode Island lives at risk of serious injury or death.

Fake Cancer Drug Crisis

Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths

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 Rhode Island. The 23 kilograms of fentanyl seized in Providence in October 2017 was enough to make over 7.6 million fatal doses—enough to kill every Rhode Island resident seven times. Prosecutors allege that a Pawtucket resident indicted in June 2018 manufactured up to 40,000 counterfeit fentanyl pills at a time.
Counterfeit and Black Market Drug Investigations in Rhode Island (2010–2018)

Based on reported investigations.
Note that each investigation could have affected hundreds of Rhode Island residents.

**Fentanyl and Counterfeit Pills Containing Fentanyl**

- **August 2018:** A man in Woonsocket was poisoned after taking two Percocets pills that police believed were actually counterfeits made with fentanyl.¹
- **June 2018:** Pawtucket resident indicted for his role in a major fentanyl pill manufacturing ring. Prosecutors alleged that he manufactured up to 40,000 fake fentanyl pills at a time between 2015 and 2017.²
- **June 2018:** Police in Providence arrested three men found in possession of four kilograms of fentanyl.³
- **April 2018:** A search of a residence in Pawtucket led to the seizure of multiple drugs, including approximately 550 counterfeit pills made with fentanyl.⁴
- **October 2017:** Law enforcement disrupted a major fentanyl and cocaine trafficking ring, seizing 23 kilograms of fentanyl in the process. The leader of the ring, Ramon Delossantos, pleaded guilty in June 2018.⁵
- **July 2017:** An East Providence man was identified as a “large-scale distributor of fentanyl-laced pills.” When he was arrested, police found 325 fentanyl pills on him.⁶

**Black Market and Counterfeit Cancer Drugs**

- **June 2016:** A Cranston businessman pleaded guilty to charges that he and his company, Lifescreen LLC, sold pharmaceuticals purchased from India and other countries as FDA-approved medication. Diwan purchased the drugs abroad, then repackaged and forged labels for them in Rhode Island.⁷
- **May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, including three doctors’ offices in Rhode Island, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.⁸

**Misbranded and Counterfeit Botox**

- **March 2016:** The FDA warned three Rhode Island 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.⁹

**Other Counterfeit Drugs and Medical Devices**

- **April 2013:** Rhode Island pair pleaded guilty to being part of an international criminal enterprise based in Israel that imported steroids and misbranded pharmaceuticals into the United States for sale via the Internet.¹⁰
- **February 2011:** Rhode Island resident Anny L. Puello pleaded guilty to illegally smuggling erectile dysfunction drugs into the country from the People’s Republic of China and selling them, falsely labeled as herbal supplements.¹¹
- **June 2010:** The Department of Health announced an investigation of 28 providers in 10 Rhode Island OB-GYN medical offices who had illegally imported non-FDA approved IUDs and inserted them into patients.¹²

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¹ Based on a report by the Providence Journal. ² Prosecutors reportedly alleged in their indictment. ³ Providence Journal. ⁴ Investigators reportedly seized 556 counterfeit pills. ⁵ Associated Press. ⁶ East Providence cop reportedly found 325 fentanyl pills. ⁷ Lifescreen LLC’s owner reportedly pleaded guilty. ⁸ FDA news release. ⁹ FDA news release. ¹⁰ Rhode Island Baptist Hospital. ¹¹ The Associated Press. ¹² Rhode Island Department of Health.
Footnotes


