

# THE DEADLY COUNTERFEIT DRUG TRADE THRIVES IN PENNSYLVANIA

**2012–2013: The FDA warned 30 doctors in Pennsylvania to stop buying from a Canadian wholesaler who sold counterfeit cancer medication.**

**Hermitage, 2012–2017: A fake online pharmacy run by a local man sold Americans illegal prescription drugs manufactured in Russia and China.**

**Trumbauersville and East Greenville, November 2015: Two men died after ingesting counterfeit Percocet pills laced with fentanyl.**

## 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.

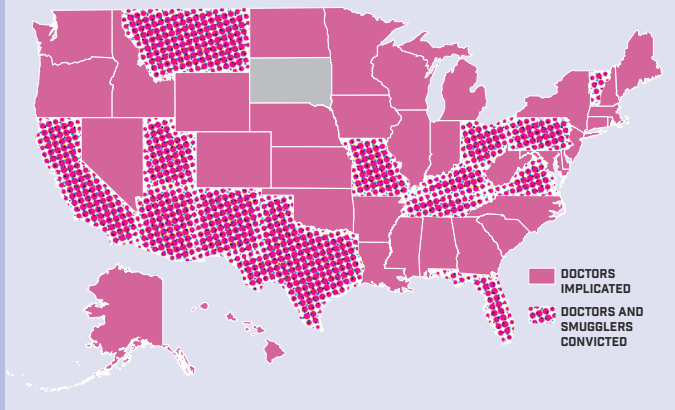
Fentanyl is a deadly threat to Pennsylvania. As early as June 2013, Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs issued a warning about acetyl fentanyl after 50 residents died after taking the drug. Counterfeit pills made with fentanyl have killed people in Warwick Township, Lower Nazareth Township, Vanderbilt, Trumbauersville, and East Greenville. In May 2019, a Wilmerding man was found in possession of a large quantity of counterfeit oxycodone pills that were a mixture of fentanyl, heroin, and tramadol.

## 81 PENNSYLVANIA DOCTORS LINKED TO FAKE DRUG RINGS

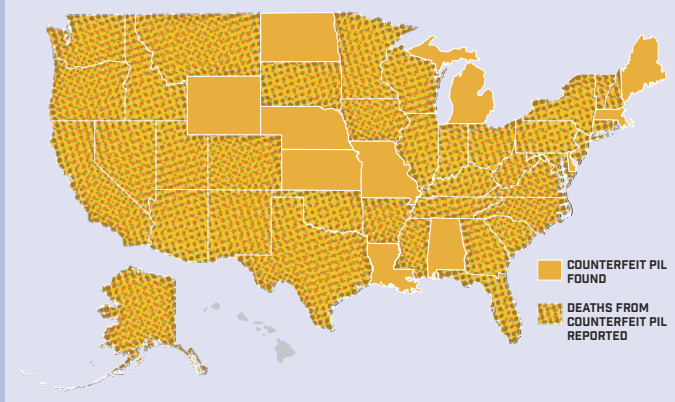
Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Pennsylvania as well. 81 different medical practices in Pennsylvania have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their 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 PENNSYLVANIA LIVES AT RISK OF SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH.

### Fake Cancer Drug Crisis



### Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths



# COUNTERFEIT AND BLACK MARKET DRUG INVESTIGATIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA (2012-2019)



BASED ON REPORTED INVESTIGATIONS.

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

## FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS MADE WITH FENTANYL

- August 2019:** The Lancaster County District Attorney issued a public warning about counterfeit pills made with fentanyl.<sup>1</sup>
- May 2019:** Federal authorities indicted a Wilmerding man who was allegedly found in possession of a large quantity of counterfeit 15-milligram oxycodone pills that tests found to be a mixture of fentanyl, heroin, and tramadol.<sup>2</sup>
- May 2019:** Prosecutors charged a Lititz woman for providing a fake fentanyl pill that killed a Warwick Township man on January 23, 2018.<sup>3</sup>
- October 2018:** A grand jury indicted a Bethlehem man who allegedly provided the fake Percocet pill that killed 27-year-old Kara Heckenberger of Lower Nazareth Township on August 9, 2017.<sup>4</sup>
- October 2018:** On two consecutive days, U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents at the Port of Philadelphia seized multiple dies for use with a pill press.<sup>5</sup>
- August 2018:** 25-year-old Corey Mandich of Vanderbilt died after taking a counterfeit oxycodone that was laced with fentanyl.<sup>6</sup>
- July 2018:** U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the Port of Philadelphia discovered 110 pounds of fentanyl en route to Pennsylvania from China.<sup>7</sup>
- June 2018:** “Operation Poison Control” by Pennsylvania law enforcement arrested 25 drug traffickers and found 6,600 doses of fentanyl.<sup>8</sup>
- June 2018:** Nathan Ott of Chambersburg was sent to prison for 17 ½ years after being caught with 18,000 fentanyl pills.<sup>9</sup>
- May 2018:** Lancaster County Drug Task Force and East Cocalico Township police arrested four Lancaster County residents for transporting 5,000 bags of fentanyl-laced heroin.<sup>10</sup>
- March 2018:** The coroner reported that 13 people in York County died in a 10-day period due to suspected fentanyl mixed with heroin.<sup>11</sup>
- March 2018:** State Police arrested a Manheim Township man for allegedly ordering hundreds of fentanyl pills via the Internet.<sup>12</sup>
- January 2018:** Two men were charged with supplying the fentanyl that killed two Millersville residents in 2017, one in February and a second in November.<sup>13</sup>
- July 2017:** 24-year-old Souderton resident Brianna Burns was sentenced to 18 years in for selling counterfeit Percocet made with fentanyl and acetyl fentanyl that killed Justin Eschenburg and Willaim Grzyminski in November 2015.<sup>14</sup>
- May 2017:** Kyle Wireman received a sentence of five to 15 years in state prison for distributing the fentanyl pill that killed Justin Eschenburg in November 2015.<sup>15</sup>
- July 2016:** A Blair County man was arrested for selling 100 counterfeit oxycodone pills laced with fentanyl to a police informant. He received a minimum four-and-one-half year sentence in February 2017.<sup>16</sup>
- November 2015:** Justin Eschenburg of Trumbauersville and William Grzyminski of East Greenville died on the third of November after ingesting counterfeit Percocet pills that contained fentanyl.<sup>17</sup>
- June 2013:** The Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs issued a warning about acetyl fentanyl after the drug had killed 50 people in the state so far that year.<sup>18</sup>

## BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

- April 2015:** The FDA sent warning letters to 17 Pennsylvania doctors and more than 270 nationwide to stop buying drugs from Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA approved medications.<sup>19</sup>

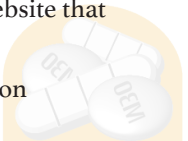
- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, including 27 doctors offices in Pennsylvania, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.<sup>20</sup>
- February–June 2012:** Three Pennsylvania doctors were among the 136 nationwide that received warning letters indicating that they may have purchased counterfeit Avastin or Altzuan from Quality Specialty Products (QSP), a CanadaDrugs subsidiary.<sup>21</sup>

## MISBRANDED AND COUNTERFEIT BOTOX

- March 2016:** The FDA warned 23 Pennsylvania 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. One doctor was warned twice.<sup>22</sup>
- July 2013:** The FDA warned six doctors and medical practices in Pennsylvania to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, Onlinebotox.com, and Onlinebotox.<sup>23</sup>
- November 2012:** Four Pennsylvania doctors were among the 350 nationwide that received warning letters indicating that they may have purchased counterfeit versions of Botox from Quality Specialty Products (QSP), a CanadaDrugs subsidiary.<sup>24</sup>

## OTHER DRUGS

- November 2019:** An Arizona resident received a 32-month federal prison sentence for selling misbranded prescription drugs to customers around the U.S., including in western PA.<sup>25</sup>
- June 2019:** An individual and a corporation in Hermitage each pleaded guilty in federal court to conspiracy to defraud agencies of the U.S. The scheme involved the sale of various illegal drugs manufactured primarily in Russia and China through a website to customers in the U.S.<sup>26</sup>
- July 2018:** Canadian company Quantum Solutions was sentenced to pay a \$150,000 fine and to forfeit more than \$4 million for selling imported, non-FDA approved medications in wholesale quantities to pharmacists in western Pennsylvania. Employees Tony Lee, Billy Lee, and Tarnjeet Uppal each received three years probation and a fine of \$55,000.<sup>27</sup>
- March 2018:** Ramesh Akkela of Mumbai, India was sentenced to 33 months in prison for running a fake online pharmacy that utilized drop-shippers in Pennsylvania<sup>28</sup> and other U.S. states to distribute misbranded drugs.<sup>29</sup>
- January 2018:** A search of a Hazelton house in connection to a case involving the sale of thousands of counterfeit oxycodone pills that tested positive for heroin and tramadol turned up a pill press.<sup>30</sup>
- October 2016:** A Costa Rican man named Ramiro Quesada pleaded guilty to running an illegal online pharmacy website that sold counterfeit medications such as Xanax, Adderall and Viagra to Pennsylvania residents.<sup>31</sup>
- December 2013:** Monongahela pharmacist Bryan R. Polomoscanik pleaded guilty to importing misbranded prescription medications from Canada to sell at the pharmacy where he worked.<sup>32</sup>



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