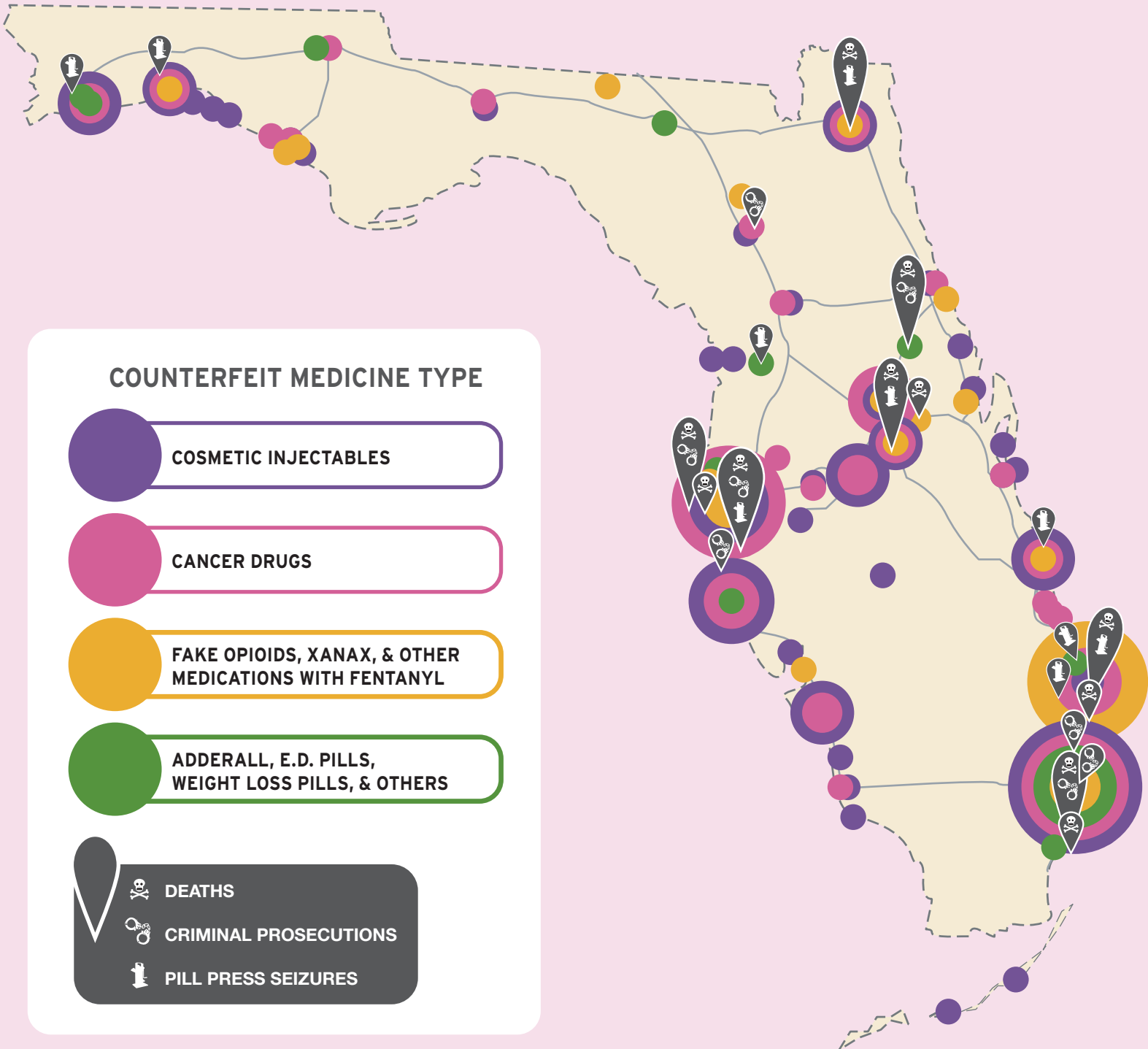


Fake Medicine Continues to Plague Florida

COUNTERFEIT PILLS, INTRAVENOUS AND INJECTABLE MEDICATIONS HAVE INJURED AND EVEN KILLED FLORIDA PATIENTS.





COUNTERFEIT PHARMACEUTICALS HAVE PLAGUED THE STATE OF FLORIDA FOR MANY YEARS.

At the beginning of the 21st century, wholesalers doing business in the state took advantage of lax enforcement to allow counterfeit, diverted, and adulterated drugs into the secure supply chain. A statewide grand jury concluded that these wholesalers were “unqualified, inexperienced, irresponsible and incompetent to properly handle, store or deal in pharmaceuticals.”¹ More recently, **federal authorities in Miami prosecuted a prescription drug trafficking ring that resold over \$78 million in diverted pills from January 2013 until May 2019.**²

Unregulated prescription drugs—**counterfeit Avastin, fake Botox, and black-market osteoporosis treatments**, among others—have also made their way to Florida. Between 2012 and 2016, 325 different medical practices in Florida were among more than 3,000 nationwide that were implicated in various black-market supply chains associated with **counterfeit cancer treatments** and other therapies.³ Families of patients like Wanda Colgan, whose Palm Harbor oncologist treated her with non-FDA-approved medicine sourced from unlicensed foreign suppliers, will never know whether their loved ones’ lives were cut short by fake medicines.⁴

The state adopted a stricter system to track legitimate medicines, but counterfeit drug smugglers continue to infiltrate the illicit opioid market and prescription drug supply to the detriment of Florida’s residents. In August 2021, federal courts sentenced an Inverness man for **manufacturing and selling almost 250,000 counterfeit Xanax pills made with a variety of unregulated benzodiazepines** on dark web marketplaces.⁵ In October 2019, a former resident of Seminole received a 30-year prison sentence for **operating a large-scale fentanyl pill manufacturing operation that put hundreds of thousands of counterfeit oxycodone pills for sale on the street.** The Pinellas County sheriff warned residents not to purchase Xanax on the street after nine people died in March 2016. Additional deaths attributed to counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl have been reported in Dunedin,⁶ Fort Lauderdale,⁷ Jacksonville,⁸ Kissimmee,⁹ Lantana,¹⁰ Miami Beach,¹¹ Osceola County,¹² Tequesta,¹³ and Wellington.¹⁴ Many more Florida residents have likely died of fentanyl poisoning after encountering these pills, but not all pill deaths are investigated for counterfeit drugs, and not all families publicly share their losses.

Fake pills look so real that families across the state may never know what actually killed their loved ones. The only way to protect Americans from these dangers is to preserve and strengthen the closed U.S. supply chain, which holds all participants in the production and sale of medicines accountable for safety regulations.

To see a list of counterfeit drug incidents in Florida between 2010 and 2018, please consult our [2018 Infosheet](#).

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