

The Deadly Counterfeit Drug Trade Thrives in Massachusetts

April 2018, Lawrence: Police broke up a drug ring run by two brothers and seized 60 pounds of fentanyl

March 2018, Worcester: Two men indicted after being found with dozens of fentanyl pills

August 2017, Hyannis: Agents seized hundreds of counterfeit oxycodone made 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.

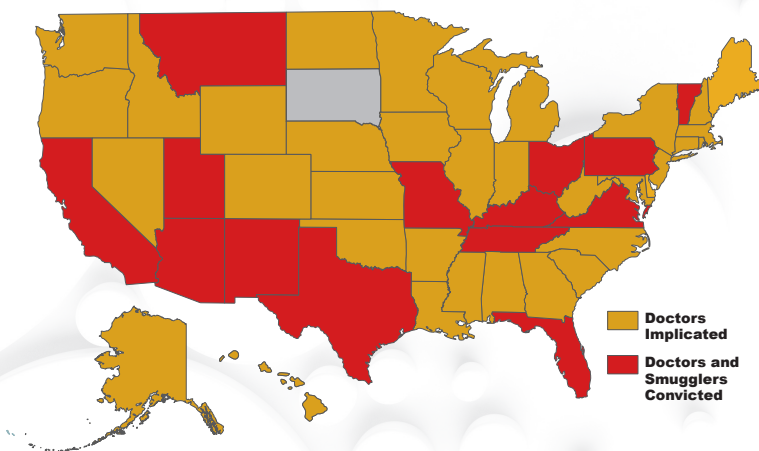
Fentanyl is a serious threat to Massachusetts. **In February 2018, “Operation High Hopes” ended with the arrest of 37 individuals associated with a major drug ring and the seizure of more than 33 pounds of fentanyl.** That amount of fentanyl could kill nearly five million people. Just two months later, police busted another drug ring based out of Lawrence and seized enough fentanyl there to kill over nine million people.

59 Massachusetts Doctors Linked to Fake Drug Rings

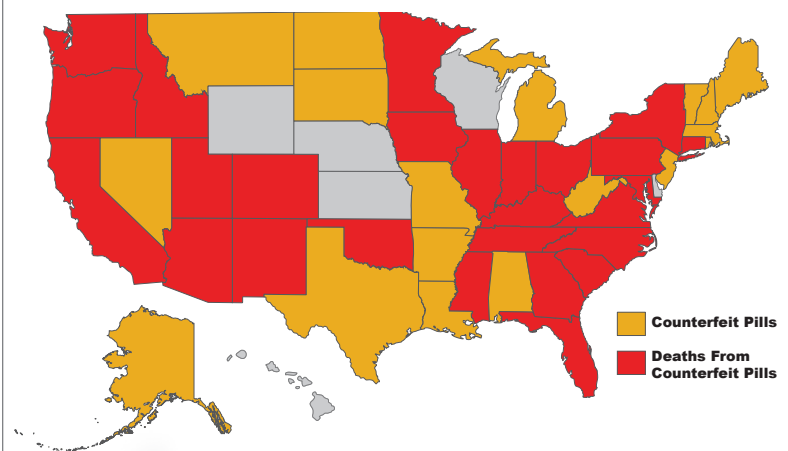
Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Massachusetts as well. 59 different medical practices in Massachusetts have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their 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 Massachusetts lives at risk of serious injury or death.

Fake Cancer Drug Crisis



Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths



Counterfeit and Black Market Drug Investigations in Massachusetts (2012–2018)

Based on reported investigations.

Note that each investigation could have affected hundreds of Massachusetts residents.

Fentanyl and Counterfeit Pills Containing Fentanyl

- August 2018:** DEA agents arrested a California man in North Andover in possession of what law enforcement believed was four kilograms of heroin, five kilograms of fentanyl, and 5,000 pills. A search of the vehicle turned up another two kilograms of narcotics and approximately 5,000 additional pills.¹
- August 2018:** A Chinese national living in Massachusetts pleaded guilty for his role in a global opioid and fentanyl distribution ring. The operation illegally shipped narcotics and counterfeit prescription drugs to his warehouse in Woburn so that packages could be forwarded to customers throughout the United States.² The two alleged leaders of the drug ring, who claimed they could manufacture counterfeit cancer medicines, were indicted later in the month.³
- May 2018:** Raids at apartments in Lynn, Peabody and Saugus turned up multiple stashes of drugs, including two and one-half kilograms of heroin and fentanyl and 1,900 oxycodone pills.⁴
- April 2018:** Law enforcement brought down a major drug ring run by two brothers who lived in Lawrence. Police arrested 45 people tied to the ring and seized 60 pounds of fentanyl.⁵
- March 2018:** U.S. Department of Justice announced the indictment of two Worcester men found in possession of multiple illicit drugs and dozens of fentanyl pills.⁶
- February 2018:** A six-month-long investigation dubbed “Operation High Hopes” brought down a major drug trafficking ring. Law enforcement seized multiple illicit drugs, including more than 33 pounds of fentanyl, and arrested 37 individuals.⁷
- August 2017:** Federal agents busted a drug ring that was allegedly responsible for distributing “kilogram quantities” of fentanyl and heroin in the Cape Cod area. Agents also seized hundreds of counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl.⁸
- March 2017:** U.S. postal inspectors seized an Ohio-bound package mailed from Falmouth that contained 1,500 fentanyl pills made to resemble oxycodone.⁹
- September 2016:** Salem Police warned residents that they had found counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl in the area.¹⁰

Black Market and Counterfeit Cancer Drugs

- April 2015:** The FDA sent warning letters to 12 Massachusetts doctors and more than 270 nationwide to stop buying drugs from Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA approved medications.¹¹
- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, including 10 doctors’ offices in Massachusetts, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.¹²

Misbranded and Counterfeit Botox

- March 2016:** The FDA warned 21 Massachusetts 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.¹³
- July 2013:** The FDA warned eight doctors and medical practices in Massachusetts to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, Onlinebotox.com, and Onlinebotox.¹⁴
- November 2012:** Eight Massachusetts 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.¹⁵

Other Counterfeit Drugs

- March 2018:** A man received a 10-year prison sentence and three years probation for manufacturing and distributing counterfeit steroids bearing the name of Onyx Pharmaceuticals, a legitimate company that does not manufacture liquid steroids. A fellow conspirator received a year-long sentence.¹⁶
- February 2018:** A Palmer man received a two-year prison sentence for importing misbranded prescription drugs from Pakistan and distributing them to customers around the United States. This case involved an assortment of drugs - including Ritalin, Percocet, hydrocodone, Adderall, and Restoril.¹⁷

Footnotes

1. "California Man Arrested for Heroin, Fentanyl Trafficking," U.S. Department of Justice, August 30, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2QaGShW>.
2. "Chinese National Living in Massachusetts Pleaded Guilty to Distributing Opioids and Other Drugs That Were Shipped From China to the U.S. and Ultimately to Ohio," U.S. Department of Justice, August 7, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2M7l5Du>.
3. "Two Chinese Nationals Charged with Operating Global Opioid and Drug Manufacturing Conspiracy Resulting in Deaths," U.S. Department of Justice, August 22, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2M27Bdu>.
4. Paul Leighton, "Wiretaps, Undercover Buys Led to Big Drug Bust," *The Salem News*, May 24, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2MUmZxX>.
5. Scott J. Croteau, "Massive Lawrence Operation Feeding Drugs to New Hampshire is Dismantled With 45 People Arrested, 60 Pounds of Fentanyl Seized," *MassLive.com*, April 26, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2wQJnP6>.
6. "Worcester Men Charged with Drug and Firearm Offenses," U.S. Department of Justice, March 30, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2M6TvaG>.
7. Antonio Planas, "Cartel Connection: Drug Bust Hailed as Bay State's Biggest," *Boston Herald*, February 9, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2CpUx28>.
8. Andy Metzger, "Fed Agents Bust Major Fentanyl, Heroin Ring," *The Lowell Sun*, August 29, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2QbpSby>.
9. Mark Gokavi, "Dark Web Fentanyl Mailed Within U.S. to Dayton Address, Feds Say," *Dayton Daily News*, March 17, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2Mo9tDz>.
10. Jason Claffey, "Lethal 'Oxycodone' Pills on North Shore Actually Fentanyl: Police," *Marblehead Patch*, September 2, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2M5CYUA>.
11. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit or Unapproved Prescription Drugs," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last updated August 17, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.
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 June 12, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
13. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.
14. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
15. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
16. "Shrewsbury Couple Sentenced for Roles in Counterfeit Steroid Conspiracy," U.S. Department of Justice, March 15, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2M9wHa9>.
17. "February 14, 2018: Palmer Man Sentenced for Conspiring to Import Prescription Drugs From Pakistan," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, February 14, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2MoajGN>.