135 ILLINOIS DOCTORS LINKED TO FAKE DRUG RINGS

Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Illinois as well. 135 different medical practices in Illinois 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.

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 in Illinois. Between 2016 and 2018, drug traffickers working under the name “The Drug Llama” sold more than 50,000 fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills as well as other counterfeit and misbranded pills to southern Illinois and across the country. In July 2017, federal agents arrested 13 members of a drug ring operating in Chicago and the West Side. Included in the massive seizure was 13 kilograms of fentanyl, enough to kill one-third of the state’s residents.
FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS MADE WITH FENTANYL

September 2018: Federal courts indicted a California woman working under the name “The Drug Llama” for distributing more than 50,000 counterfeit oxycodone laced with fentanyl as well as other counterfeit and misbranded pills to southern Illinois and across the country. ¹ A co-conspirator, Brandon Arias, pleaded guilty in July 2019.²

May 2018: 19-year-old Rachel Ramirez died in Cary after taking a fentanyl-laced counterfeit pill. Her boyfriend, Jacob Reis pleaded guilty to charges he delivered the pill in March 2019.³

August 2017: Cook County recorded a 2,700 percent increase in overdoses caused by fentanyl from 2014 to 2016. In 2014 there were 582 fatal overdoses due to fentanyl and in 2016 there were 3,946.⁴

November 2016: A Utah-based drug counterfeiting operation shipped buyers in Illinois fentanyl-laced counterfeit oxycodone pills.⁵

February 2016: Illinois State Police issued a warning about counterfeit Xanax pills made with fentanyl being available on the street.⁶

BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

April 2016: Dr. Ann Kinnealey relinquished her controlled substance license and her physician and surgeon license after the Illinois State Medical Board found that she bought misbranded cancer medication from Quality Specialty Products, a supplier of counterfeit Avastin and subsidiary of CanadaDrugs.⁷

April 2015: The FDA sent letters to seven Illinois doctors and more than 271 nationwide warning them to stop buying drugs from Gallant Pharmaceuticals, which sold more than 39 non-FDA approved medications.⁸

May 2013: The FDA warned 781 doctors, 34 in Illinois, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.⁹

February–June 2012: Ten Illinois 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.¹⁰

MISBRANDED/COUNTERFEIT BOTOX AND BEAUTY TREATMENTS

March 2016: 52 Illinois doctors and more than 1,225 nationwide were sent letters telling them to stop buying from Canadian distributor TC Medical, which sold 22 different kinds of non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Botox. Four Illinois doctors had to be warned a second time for buying from TC Medical.¹¹

February 2015: Christopher Carstens, owner of Orthopedic Solutions, Inc., received five years probation and a $50,000 fine for distributing more than $3 million in misbranded and imported Botox & Juvederm.¹²

July 2013: The FDA warned seven doctors and medical practices in Illinois to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, Onlinebotox.com, and Onlinebotox.¹³

November 2012: 25 Illinois doctors were among over 350 U.S. medical practices that received warning letters indicating that they may have purchased counterfeit versions of Botox from Quality Specialty Products (QSP), a CanadaDrugs subsidiary.¹⁴
OTHER COUNTERFEIT DRUG INCIDENTS

April 2019: Stephan Caamano of Champaign pleaded guilty to manufacturing and distributing large quantities of counterfeit Xanax in 2017 and 2018.\(^9\)

March 2018: Champaign resident Skyler Prahl received a sentence of one year and one day and three years supervised release for making over 80,000 homemade tramadol capsules and selling them throughout the United States.\(^10\)

January 2016: Chicago pharmacist Michael Mankiewicz, whose license was revoked in 2012, was sentenced to a year in prison for importing shipments of counterfeit erectile dysfunction drugs from China.\(^11\)

July 2014: Chicago resident Faye Al-Jabri was sentenced to 41 months in prison for smuggling thousands of counterfeit erectile dysfunction pills from China into the United States for further distribution.\(^12\)

December 2010: During an investigation of a local businessman, authorities in Naperville found that he possessed 20,000 counterfeit Valium pills and 20,000 counterfeit Xanax pills. They suspected the drugs were manufactured in China.\(^13\)

July 2010: A 44-year-old man from Orland Park faced charges after Will County authorities found 200,000 counterfeit pills made to look like an unspecified Pfizer product.\(^14\)

FOOTNOTES


