

# THE DEADLY COUNTERFEIT DRUG TRADE THRIVES IN NEBRASKA

**November 2019, Omaha: DEA agents issued a warning about counterfeit fentanyl pills in the area.**

**November 2012–March 2016: FDA issued warning letters to five doctors in Nebraska instructing them to stop purchasing non FDA-approved Botox.**

## 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.

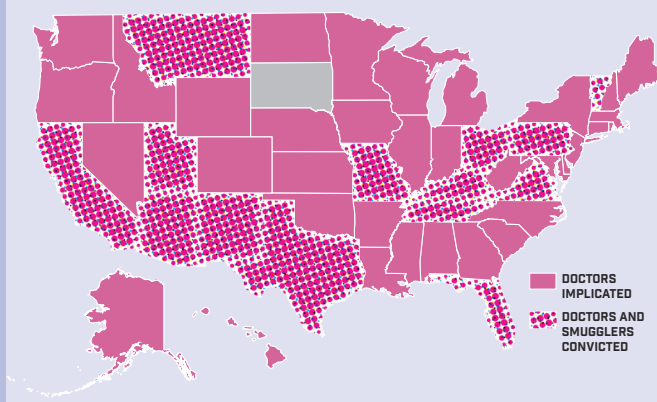
Fentanyl is a serious threat in Nebraska. In January 2018, agents with the FDA's Office of Criminal Investigations seized a package of suspected counterfeit fentanyl pills on their way to a Nebraska resident. The following June, law enforcement searched a tractor trailer driving on I-80 near Kearney and found 118 pounds of fentanyl—at least 17.8 million fatal doses. In September 2019, a Lincoln man received a prison sentence for possession of illicit drugs, including counterfeit pills made with fentanyl.

## SIX NEBRASKA DOCTORS LINKED TO FAKE DRUG RINGS

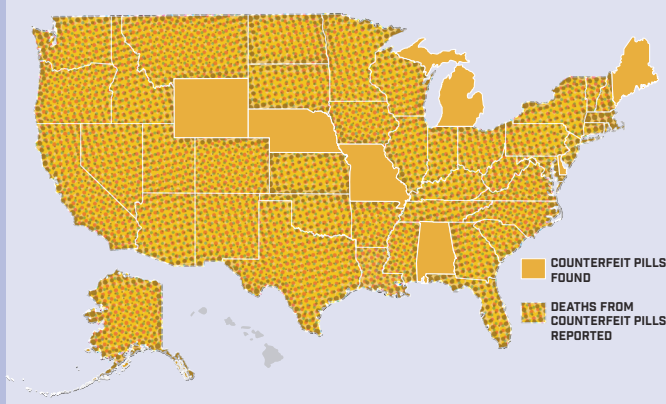
Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Nebraska as well. Six different medical practices in Nebraska have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their loved ones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

**Fake Cancer Drug Crisis**



**Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths**



# COUNTERFEIT AND BLACK MARKET DRUG INVESTIGATIONS IN NEBRASKA (2012–2020)



BASED ON REPORTED INVESTIGATIONS.

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

## FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS CONTAINING FENTANYL

- November 2019:** U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents warned that counterfeit fentanyl pills have been circulating in the state, specifically in the Omaha area.<sup>1</sup>
- May 2019:** The U.S. Attorney's office in Nebraska announced the conviction of Lincoln resident Sabas Rodriguez-Cisneros for drug trafficking. U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents intercepted a package addressed to the man's girlfriend that contained methamphetamine and almost 200 fentanyl pills in March 2018.<sup>2</sup> The judge sentenced Rodriguez-Cisneros to 250 months in federal prison in September 2019.<sup>3</sup>
- June 2018:** The U.S. Department of Justice filed charges against two men who were pulled over near Kearney in April. Police found hidden compartments that held 118 pounds of fentanyl in their truck.<sup>4</sup>
- June 2018:** Douglas County Sheriff's deputies seized more than 18 pounds of fentanyl and almost three pounds of heroin near Omaha.<sup>5</sup>
- March 2018:** Two Omaha residents each received a 15-year prison sentence for their roles in a drug trafficking ring which distributed fentanyl in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. Four residents of Iowa also participated in this drug ring.<sup>6</sup>
- January 2018:** While they were investigating California-based oxycodone counterfeiters Wyatt Pasek, Duc Cao and Isiah Suarez, agents from the U.S. FDA's Office of Criminal Investigations intercepted a parcel shipped to Nebraska, containing 144 presumed-counterfeit oxycodone pills.<sup>7</sup>
- November 2017:** Nebraska's crime laboratories saw a three-fold increase in cases involving fentanyl in just the first nine months of 2017 over all twelve months in 2016.<sup>8</sup>
- November 2017:** Four residents of Omaha were indicted on charges of conspiracy to manufacture and distribute carfentanil, a fentanyl analogue 10,000 times more potent than morphine.<sup>9</sup>
- October 2017:** DEA agents discovered 33 pounds of powdered fentanyl in a suitcase at the Omaha train station.<sup>10</sup> The man to whom the bag belonged received a sentence of more than four years in June 2018.<sup>11</sup>

## BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, including one doctor's office in Nebraska, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.<sup>12</sup>

## OTHER MISBRANDED AND COUNTERFEIT DRUGS

- May 2020:** The U.S. District Court of Nebraska charged a Bellevue resident for allegedly selling misbranded and unapproved foreign drugs via a website, [www.worldddrugprices.com](http://www.worldddrugprices.com), while falsely marketing them as FDA-approved.<sup>13</sup>
- March 2016:** The FDA warned three Nebraska 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.<sup>14</sup>
- July 2013:** The FDA warned one doctor or medical practice in Nebraska to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, [Onlinebotox.com](http://Onlinebotox.com), and [Onlinebotox](http://Onlinebotox).<sup>15</sup>
- November 2012:** One Nebraska doctor was 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>16</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

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2. "Lincoln Man Convicted on Methamphetamine Charges," *KOLN-TV*, May 16, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2EsgHiR>.
3. "Lincoln Man Sentenced on Methamphetamine Charge," U.S. Department of Justice, September 3, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2xQLOo2>.
4. Maggie Cunningham, "Largest Fentanyl Bust in Nebraska Leads to Indictments of 2 New Jersey Men, Police Say," *KETV*, June 7, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2De7bBI>.
5. "Deputies Seize More Than 20lbs of Fentanyl, Heroin at Omaha," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 5, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2MKY5Mg>.
6. "Omaha Man Sentenced in Iowa in Fentanyl Trafficking Case," *KCRG-TV9*, March 2, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2QJ8ACH>; "Omaha Man Sentenced in Drug Conspiracy Case," *WOWT NBC Omaha*, March 2, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2xyeoGz>.
7. Complaint, U.S. District Court, Central District of California, Case 8:18-mj-00160-DUTY, April 4, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2Esf5W7>.
8. Riley Johnson, "Fentanyl Has Proven a Game-changer in Nebraska, Drug Cops Say," *Lincoln Journal Star*, November 19, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2NnrGk6>.
9. Indictment, U.S. District Court, District of Nebraska, Case No. 8:17-cr-00336-RFR, <http://bit.ly/2pjILwy>; "DEA Issues Carfentanil Warning to Police and Public," U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, September 22, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2NYzgRq>.
10. Alia Conley, "Fentanyl Bust at Omaha Train Station is Nebraska's Biggest Ever, One of Nation's Largest," *Omaha World-Herald*, October 16, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2Nn6N8p>.
11. "California Man Sentenced for 15 Kilos of Fentanyl Seized at Omaha Train Station," *Lincoln Journal Star*, June 15, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2xmJgus>.
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 July 2, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
13. Lori Pilger, "FDA Outlines Years-Long Investigation into Bellevue Man's Alleged Conspiracy to Sell Mislabeled, Unapproved Drugs," *Lincoln Journal Star*, May 13, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2DJIn5l>.
14. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit or Unapproved Prescription Drugs," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last updated July 3, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.
15. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.
16. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters to Doctors...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.