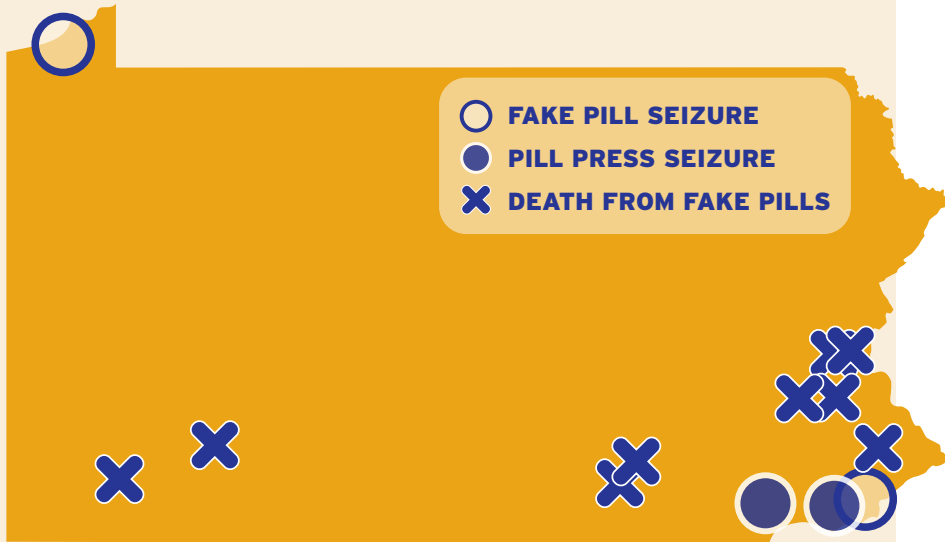




Fake Medicine Is Killing People Around The Keystone State



THE PANDEMIC DID NOT STOP FENTANYL PILLS IN PENNSYLVANIA

In February 2021, officials in **Philadelphia** warned that **the number of counterfeit pills on the city's streets had skyrocketed** over the past year. In 2020, state police arrested a Michigan man outside **Erie's Union Station** after they found him with a large number of suspected fentanyl pills and federal courts prosecuted two men—one from **Delaware County** and the other from **Chester County**—for **making counterfeit pills** from fentanyl analogues they imported from China. Since 2015, public sources have reported deaths in **Bethlehem, East Greenville, Lancaster, Millersville, Trumbauersville, Vanderbilt, Windber, and Lower Nazareth and Warwick Townships**.

FAKE MEDICINE IS NOT JUST FOUND ON STREET CORNERS



Between 2012 and 2016, the **FDA sent warning letters to 81 doctors' offices across Pennsylvania** telling them to stop **purchasing medications from known black-market wholesalers** that had been

caught selling counterfeit medicines. The problem of counterfeit medicine in Pennsylvania extends beyond doctors' offices. In 2021, federal authorities jailed Stefan Knoche of Lebanon for trafficking in **counterfeit versions of Viagra, Aurogra, Xanax, Levitra, Cialis, and Valium**, and sentenced Michael Gordon of Philadelphia to 20 years in prison for buying counterfeit Xanax pills online and selling them to customers.



February 2021, Philadelphia: Officials warned that the number of counterfeit pills containing fentanyl for sale around town has skyrocketed over the past year.



December 2020, Erie: State police arrested a man in possession of a large number of fentanyl pills outside the train station.



November 2020, Lancaster: Resident sentenced to 13 years for selling a fake fentanyl pill that killed a man in 2019.

Make sure Pennsylvanians have access to the medicines they need. Protect and strengthen the U.S.'s secure drug supply chain.

COUNTERFEIT AND BLACK MARKET DRUG INCIDENTS IN PENNSYLVANIA, 2012-2021

BASED ON REPORTED INVESTIGATIONS.

FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS CONTAINING FENTANYL

- March 2021:** Former California resident Victor Daniel Gutierrez admitted in federal court in Erie to mailing fentanyl pills into the state.¹
- February 2021:** Officials in Philadelphia warned that the number of counterfeit pills containing fentanyl for sale around town had skyrocketed over the past year.²
- February 2021:** Police arrested a second individual for allegedly selling Isaiah Cruz the counterfeit Percocet that killed him in December 2019.³
- December 2020:** State Police arrested a Michigan man outside Erie's Union Station who was found in possession of a large number of blue pills they suspected were made with fentanyl.⁴
- November 2020:** Tre Hall died after ingesting a counterfeit oxycodone pill containing fentanyl in a house in Windber. Authorities charged two women involved with the case in March 2021.⁵
- November 2020:** Hector V. Nazario of Lancaster received up to a 13-year sentence for selling the counterfeit oxycodone pill containing fentanyl that killed Christian Querry in February 2019.⁶
- September 2020:** Kevin Swing of West Chester received a six-and-one-half-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to distributing over 900 counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl.⁷
- September 2020:** The Montgomery County District Attorney indicted a Philadelphia resident for allegedly selling counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl around the local area.⁸
- June 2020:** Federal agents prevented a man from delivering 8,000 suspected fentanyl pills to the Philadelphia-area by arresting him on the Massachusetts Turnpike.⁹
- March 2020:** A woman died in a Bethlehem Wawa parking lot after ingesting what she believed were oxycodone pills. The pills were fakes made with fentanyl. Police charged two dealers for their involvement in her death.¹⁰
- March 2020:** Stephen Stroh of Morton and Vaughan Reiser of Landenberg were sentenced to 17-and-one-half years and six-and-one-half years, respectively, for importing synthetic narcotics from China. The pair manufactured counterfeit pills, including fake oxycodone that contained fentanyl and Adderall that contained methamphetamine, which they sold online.¹¹
- August 2019:** The Lancaster County District Attorney issued a public warning about counterfeit pills made with fentanyl.¹²
- May 2019:** Federal authorities indicted Keith Navarro-Palmer of Wilmerding for possession of a large quantity of 15-milligram oxycodone pills that tests found to be a mixture of fentanyl, heroin, and tramadol.¹³ Navarro-Palmer received a sentence of more than six years in prison in March 2021.¹⁴
- May 2019:** Prosecutors charged a Lititz woman for providing a fake fentanyl pill that killed a Warwick Township man on January 23, 2018.¹⁵
- October 2018:** A grand jury indicted Gustavo Rivera, a Bethlehem man who provided the fake Percocet pill that killed 27-year-old Kara Heckenberger of Lower Nazareth Township on August 9, 2017.¹⁶ Rivera received a four-and-one-half to nine-year prison sentence for drug delivery resulting in death in November 2020.¹⁷
- 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.¹⁸
- August 2018:** 25-year-old Corey Mandich of Vanderbilt died after taking a counterfeit oxycodone that was made with fentanyl.¹⁹
- July 2018:** U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the Port of Philadelphia discovered 110 pounds of fentanyl en route to Pennsylvania from China.²⁰

For a list of eight fentanyl powder and fentanyl pill incidents in Pennsylvania from June 2013 through June 2018, please refer to the PA state sheet published in December 2019 at <http://safedr ug/PA-State-Sheet-Dec-2019>.

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.²¹
- 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.²²
- 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.²³

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.²⁴
- 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.²⁵
- 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.²⁶

OTHER DRUGS

- November 2020:** Justin Ash of Murrieta, CA received a 24-month sentence after he admitted to smuggling bulk amounts of unapproved drugs into the U.S. Ash pressed the powders into pills and sold the pills online to customers around the U.S., including in Pennsylvania.²⁷
- August 2020:** Stefan Knoche of Lebanon was indicted for trafficking in counterfeit versions of Viagra, Aurogra, Xanax, Levitra, Cialis, and Valium.²⁸ Knoche received a 70-month sentence in April 2021.²⁹
- August 2020:** Arizona resident Jeremy Brooks pleaded guilty to his role in operating a website that sold and distributed misbranded drugs purchased from overseas to customers in the U.S., including in the Keystone State.³⁰
- March 2020:** A judge sentenced Michael Gordon of Philadelphia to twenty years in prison for trafficking in counterfeit Xanax pills that he purchased online and sold for a profit to customers.³¹
- March 2020:** Zachary Hyde of Pittsburgh pleaded guilty to federal narcotics charges. According to information presented in court, Hyde sourced large quantities of methamphetamine, and pressed it into pills using a pill press kept at a location in McKees Rocks.³²
- December 2019:** Thomas Whalen, a rheumatologist in Havertown, pleaded guilty to fraud and drug importation charges for his role in a scheme to illegally import medications not approved by the FDA and administer them to his patients. Medications involved in this case were Remicade, Synvisc, Synvisc-One, Orencia, Prolia/Xgeva, and Boniva.³³
- November 2019:** Keith Komar of Arizona received a 32-month federal prison sentence for selling misbranded prescription drugs to customers around the U.S., including in western PA.³⁴
- June 2019:** Emil Koledin and Koledin Enterprises, Inc. 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.³⁵
- 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 \$55,000.³⁶
- March 2018:** Ramesh Akkela of Mumbai, India was sentenced to 33 months in prison for running a fake online pharmacy that used drop-shippers in Pennsylvania³⁷ and other U.S. states to distribute misbranded drugs.³⁸
- 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.³⁹
- 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.⁴⁰
- December 2013:** Monongahela pharmacist Bryan R. Polomoscanik pleaded guilty to importing misbranded prescription medications from Canada to sell at the pharmacy where he worked.⁴¹

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