

# An Athlete's Life Cut Short by Trust



Blain Padgett, with his sisters.

“Dad, what do I have to do?” As a kid in Sour Lake, Texas, Blain Padgett looked up to his father Mical and dreamed of playing college football like him. Blain didn't just dream: he worked hard for it, training, skill-building, and excelling

academically. Years of persistence earned him a full athletic scholarship and a defensive end position with the Rice University Owls in 2015. However, his dream was cut short on March 2, 2018 when Blain suddenly died.

Blain was passionate about football, his friends, and his family. His sister Kenedy said, “He showed his love to everyone. Anyone he talked to, you could just see that he made them feel good because he listened to them.” While Mical had played college ball casually, Blain pushed himself to the limit of his abilities. “Blain was more of a student of the game, and he didn't hesitate at anything to get an edge,” said Mical. Even injury did not deter him. At Rice, Blain had knee and shoulder surgeries. That March, he had been given medical clearance to resume training. But to his teammates' shock, Blain didn't show up for his first workout.

This wasn't like Blain and his friends sought him everywhere. While worried teammates called the Houston Police Department, another called Mical. Alarmed and disbelieving Blain had missed a workout, Mical and Kenedy drove straight to Houston. Kenedy grasped for reasons but knew in her heart that nothing would have kept her brother away. After thirty minutes, Houston police called. Mical pulled onto the side of the highway, and Kenedy called her mother, Wyndi. A friend brought his mother and younger sister to a nearby gas station. The family and their pastor drove on to Houston in grief. Outside Blain's apartment, family, friends, teammates, and coaches held a vigil into the night.

Three months later, the Padgetts were aggrieved when a local paper reported Blain's death and falsely suggested he had abused drugs. His family had suffered for months without knowing why he had died, until toxicology tests showed he had ingested a counterfeit pill made of carfentanil. Preparing for his first workout the next morning since shoulder surgery, Blain took a hydrocodone pill from a trusted friend and a former Rice football player. Authorities in Houston filed charges against him in October 2018 and moved up to the federal court system in July 2019.

The Padgett family is forever changed because of the loss of Blain. Mical said, “We are coping with depression, a kind of hopelessness, and anxiety. Still once or twice a day, it will hit me that he is gone.” Mical grieves that Blain died after taking a counterfeit of the same pill prescribed to him post-surgery: “We need to raise awareness amongst the public that counterfeits are in America and putting us at risk. The only safe place to get a medicine is from a local or hospital pharmacy. Friends and acquaintances, even those you trust, are not safe sources of medication.” ■

## 49 States Have a Deadly Fentanyl Problem

### What is in these fake pills?

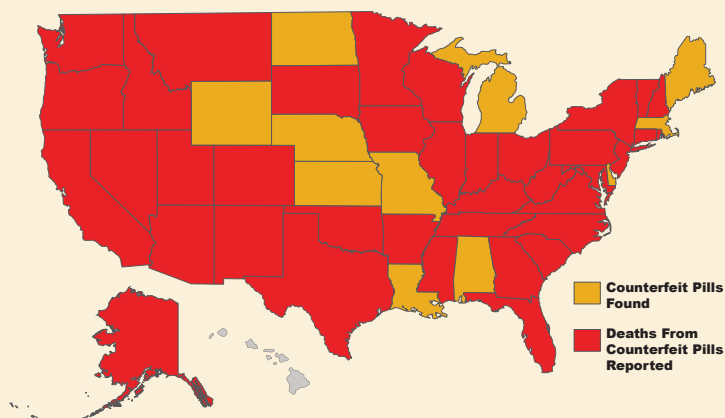
Pills that look like prescription painkillers, anti-anxiety meds, and even aspirin have all been found. They contain deadly doses of fentanyl or related analogues sourced from illegal labs overseas.

### Where do they come from?

Mexican cartels and rogue Chinese manufacturers make finished pills which are then smuggled and mailed into the U.S. Illicit Chinese chemical companies also mail raw fentanyl and pill presses to ambitious U.S. drug dealers who then use them to make counterfeit prescription medication.

### When did the epidemic start?

Cartels and dealers first mixed fentanyl into heroin in the 1990s, but the first reports of fake prescription medications made with fentanyl came in 2014.



**As of August 2019, counterfeit fentanyl pills have been found in 49 states with confirmed deaths in 38. “48 States and Counting,” the most recent update, is available at <http://safedr.org/48states>**