



Threats to HIV patients from criminals in the drug supply chain

In recent years, federal prosecutors, drug manufacturers, and patient safety organizations have uncovered extensive criminal schemes targeting HIV medicines at every point in the supply chain. The problem runs through licensed wholesalers and pharmacies, social media and dating apps, health insurance administrators, and online marketplaces.

These schemes undermine trust in the healthcare system, and they endanger patients. Every stakeholder in HIV care must be vigilant against them.



Wholesalers sit at the heart of the U.S. drug supply chain. When they fail, the damage is immense. Safe Chain Solutions, a licensed wholesaler in Maryland, settled a lawsuit involving tens of millions of dollars of diverted HIV drugs; its owners are facing criminal prosecution. Licensed pharmacies purchased over [85,000 counterfeit bottles](#) in good faith, and patients received medicines that endangered them.



Crime has even penetrated **pharmacies**, the final checkpoint before medicine reaches patients. A [March 2025 civil complaint](#) alleges that a Queens, New York pharmacy dispensed a convincing counterfeit bottle of Biktarvy with missing tablets and a fake expiration date. Just that single compromised pharmacy could have exposed any number of patients.



Criminals posing as buyers clubs use **dating apps** like [Grindr](#) to convince patients to sell their HIV medication or their empty bottles, sometimes repackaging and selling the treatments to unsuspecting pharmacies. Patients who depend on reliable medicine can end up with expired, substandard, or counterfeit drugs.



Even patients with **health insurance** are not immune. In *Gilead v. Meritain Health*, [courts found administrators and PBMs pressuring HIV patients to use illegally imported Turkish medicine](#) to save health plans money. These products were not FDA-approved or part of the U.S. track-and-trace system, and their foreign language labels could have caused serious medicine safety errors. The court ruled that importing HIV drugs outside legal channels is unsafe, illegal, and exposes administrators to personal and professional liability.



Finally, **online pharmacy marketplaces** have served as distribution hubs for black-market medicine. Boris Aminov, a Brooklyn resident, was sentenced to nine years in federal prison for [funneling at least \\$20 million in secondhand HIV medicines to pharmacies](#) via a pharmacy-to-pharmacy sales platform.

Crime in the HIV medicine supply chain is real, ongoing, and potentially everywhere. Licensed wholesalers and pharmacies, trusted insurers, social apps, and online marketplaces have all been channels for counterfeit and diverted HIV drugs. Businesses involved in these schemes face legal action, but ultimately, patients will pay the price.

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