

# THE DEADLY COUNTERFEIT DRUG TRADE THRIVES IN NORTH DAKOTA

**May 2013: The FDA warned two doctors to stop purchasing medicine from an unlicensed wholesaler that sold a fake cancer medication.**

**March 2020, Grand Forks: A resident died after taking a counterfeit Xanax made with fentanyl.**

## 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 North Dakota. Two North Dakotans suffered serious bodily harm after they ingested counterfeit pills made with fentanyl sold by a drug ring operating out of Texas. Between October 2017 and January 2018, five members of a drug ring that sold fake fentanyl pills in North Dakota and Minnesota each received prison sentences ranging from 24 to 65 months. One person in Grand Forks suffered a non-fatal overdose from a pill sold by this drug ring. In March 2020, another Grand Forks resident died after taking a fentanyl-laced counterfeit Xanax pill.

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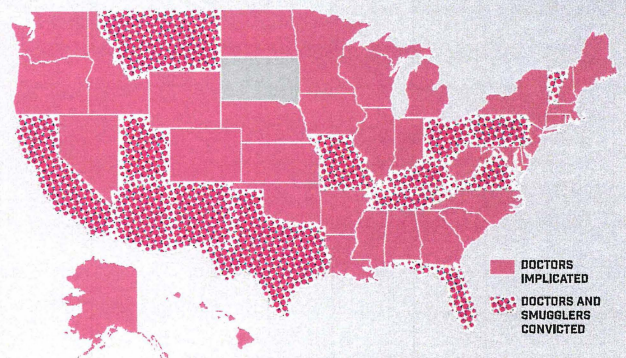
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## 10 NORTH DAKOTA DOCTORS LINKED TO FAKE DRUG RINGS

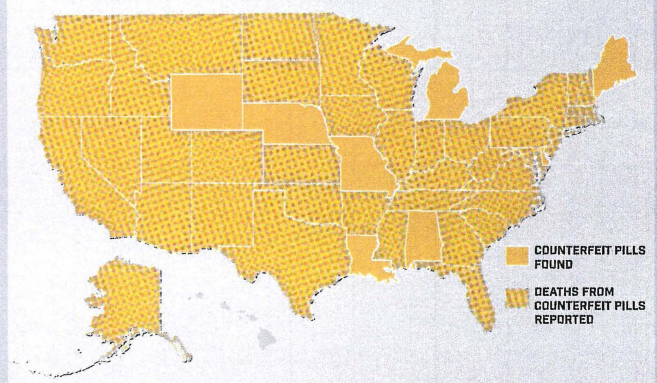
Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched North Dakota as well. 10 different medical practices in North Dakota have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their 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 NORTH DAKOTA LIVES AT RISK OF SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH.

**Fake Cancer Drug Crisis**



**Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths**



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

BASED ON REPORTED INVESTIGATIONS.

NOTE THAT EACH INVESTIGATION COULD HAVE AFFECTED HUNDREDS OF NORTH DAKOTA RESIDENTS.

## FENTANYL AND COUNTERFEIT PILLS MADE WITH FENTANYL

- March 2020:** A 24-year-old Grand Forks man died after he took a counterfeit Xanax made with fentanyl.<sup>1</sup>
- October 2019:** The leader of a Texas-based fake fentanyl pill drug ring received a 30-year sentence. Pills sold by this ring caused serious bodily injury to two residents of North Dakota.<sup>2</sup>
- July 2019:** Daniel Vivas Ceron pleaded guilty to operating an international drug trafficking ring while incarcerated in Canada from 2013 to 2017. The ring shipped several hundred pounds of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues across the U.S., causing 15 overdoses in North Dakota, Oregon, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Rhode Island, including four fatal overdoses, one of which was Grand Forks resident 18-year-old Bailey Henke.<sup>3</sup>
- February 2019:** The Jamestown Police Department reported seizing counterfeit oxycodone pills that contained fentanyl.<sup>4</sup>
- June 2018:** The U.S. Attorney's Office in Fargo indicted a Rhode Island man for his alleged role in a drug trafficking ring that distributed tens of thousands of counterfeit fentanyl pills throughout the U.S.<sup>5</sup>
- October 2017:** Chinese national Jian Zhang and eight other individuals were indicted in Fargo. Zhang faced multiple charges including Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute and Distribute Controlled Substances and Controlled Substance Analogues Resulting in Serious Bodily Injury and Death.<sup>6</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice issued a superseding indictment in April 2018, bringing the total number of defendants in this case to 28.<sup>7</sup>
- August 2017:** Police in Grand Forks issued a warning to members of the public after four people overdosed on fentanyl in just a few days.<sup>8</sup>
- May 2017:** The indictment of Aaron Shamo from Utah shows his fentanyl drug ring shipped 500 counterfeit pills into North Dakota.<sup>9</sup>
- March 2017:** The Narcotics Task Force seized hundreds of counterfeit oxycodone pills laced with fentanyl in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.<sup>10</sup>
- March 2017:** Authorities arrested six residents of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, Minnesota for fentanyl pill trafficking after fentanyl-laced oxycodone pills they sold caused a Grand Forks man to overdose.<sup>11</sup> Over the course of 2017 and 2018, six conspirators pleaded guilty in state or federal court and received sentences ranging from 24 to 65 months.<sup>12</sup>

## BLACK MARKET AND COUNTERFEIT CANCER DRUGS

- May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, two in North Dakota, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.<sup>13</sup>
- February–June 2012:** Two North Dakota doctors were among the 136 nationwide that received warning letters indicating that they may have purchased counterfeit Avastin or Altezuan from Quality Specialty Products (QSP), a CanadaDrugs subsidiary.<sup>14</sup>

## MISBRANDED AND COUNTERFEIT BOTOX

- March 2016:** The FDA warned 4 doctors and clinics in North Dakota 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>15</sup>
- July 2013:** The FDA warned four medical practices in North Dakota to stop purchasing fraudulent versions of Botox sold by Online Botox Pharmacy, Onlinebotox.com, and Onlinebotox.<sup>16</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

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