

# The Deadly Counterfeit Drug Trade Thrives in Iowa


**Polk County, November 2017: Officials reported on six overdose deaths caused by carfentanil**

**Council Bluffs, August 2017: In less than one week, six people overdosed on 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.**

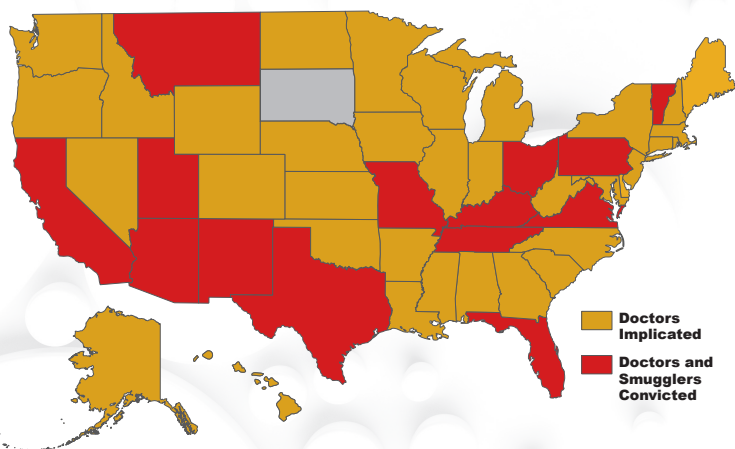
Fentanyl is a serious threat to Iowans. In August 2017, three people were found unresponsive at a gas station in Council Bluffs and a fourth was found at a house not far away 30 minutes later. Two additional overdoses followed just days later. The police believed fentanyl caused all of these overdoses. Diligent emergency medical workers revived everyone, but a month later, one of the victims described his suffering: **lung and kidney failure, blood clots, memory loss and hospitalization for more than a week.**

## 9 Iowa Doctors Linked to Fake Drug Rings

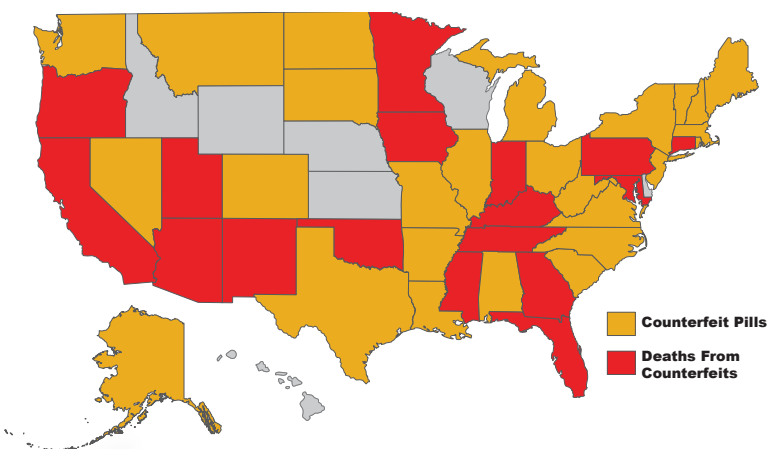
Counterfeit cancer drugs have touched Iowa as well. Nine different medical practices in Iowa have been implicated in various black market supply chains associated with counterfeit cancer treatments and other therapies. Families who have lost relatives to cancer will never know if their loved ones were given real medication or fake, and if they died from a lack of treatment. 

**Opening the U.S.'s closed drug supply chain puts Iowan lives at risk of serious injury or death.**

**Fake Cancer Drug Crisis**



**Fentanyl-Laced Counterfeits & Related Deaths**



# Counterfeit and Black Market Drug Investigations in Iowa (2013–2017)

**Based on reported investigations.**

**Note that each investigation could have affected hundreds of Iowa residents.**

## Fentanyl, Carfentanil, and Counterfeit Pills Made with Fentanyl

**November 2017:** Carfentanil, a drug 10,000 times more powerful than morphine, arrived in Iowa. Polk County Officials reported six deaths from carfentanil overdoses.<sup>1</sup>

**September 2017:** An Iowa fentanyl overdose survivor, who was one of four people that overdosed in Council Bluffs, described the continuing health problems he suffers as a result.<sup>2</sup>

**August 2017:** A total of six fentanyl overdoses in the Council Bluffs area were reported in a single week, including four reported on August 3rd.<sup>3</sup>

**July 2017:** The director of Iowa Poison Control Center warned that counterfeit pills containing fentanyl had entered from the east and were migrating across the state.<sup>4</sup>

**July 2017:** The Iowa Department of Public Health warned that a second batch of fake oxycodone pills, this time containing fentanyl and U-4770, were found in the state.<sup>5</sup>

## Black Market and Counterfeit Cancer Drugs

**November 2016:** An Iowa cancer clinic and oncologist were required to pay more than \$176,000 in fines to settle False Claims Act allegations. Hematology and Oncology Center of Iowa purchased medication from convicted counterfeit drug distributor, Medical Device King.<sup>6</sup>

**March 2016:** Four Iowa doctors, Mark O. Carlson, of Siouxland Adult Medicine Clinic, John Hoffman of Orthopaedic Specialists, Val O. Lyons of Pharmacy Medical Associates, and Ellen Shepler of Pharmacy Medical Associates, were among more than 1,227 doctors nationwide who received warning letters from the FDA to stop buying infusion drugs from TC Medical Group, which sold more than \$33 million worth of non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Botox.<sup>7</sup>

**May 2013:** The FDA warned 780 medical practices, including three Iowa doctors offices, Hematology & Oncology Center of Iowa, Metro Anesthesia & Pain Management, and The Dental Center, to stop doing business with unlicensed drug seller Medical Device King, which had sold 31 non-FDA approved medications, including counterfeit Avastin.<sup>8</sup>

**2012–2013:** The FDA warned two Iowa medical practices, Mona Alqulali of Infinity Medical Group and Medical Associates of Clinton, Iowa, and more than 500 across the country to stop buying from CanadaDrugs.com subsidiaries that had sold American doctors counterfeit Avastin.<sup>9</sup>

1. Lauren Donovan, "Drug 10,000 times more powerful than morphine arrives in Iowa," *KCCI 8 News*, November 17, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2F2faxu>.

2. "Iowa Fentanyl overdose survivor speaks." *KWQC TV6*, September 26, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2ntAoXm>.

3. Christina Lorey, "Bad batch of fentanyl lands six Iowans in the hospital in one week," *WQAD News 8*, August 4, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2DABO33> and "Council Bluffs police locate 4 people suspected of overdosing on fentanyl," *KETV 7*, August 3, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2DzhQER>.

4. Kevin Patrick Allen, "Counterfeit Opioid Pills: New Threat to Iowans," *KMA*, July 22, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2n3pXAb>.

5. Charly Haley, "Iowa officials warn of fake pain pills found in state," *Des Moines Register*, July 17, 2017, <http://dmreg.co/2G2WUFD>.

6. "Iowa doctor settles allegations that he recklessly billed for cancer drugs and visits that never happened," *North Iowa Today*, November 29, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2G5jTjo>.

7. "FDA Issues Letters to Doctors Who May Have Purchased Counterfeit or Unapproved Prescription Drugs," U.S. Food and Drug Administration, last updated August 17, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2DqFh4c>.

8. "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 June 12, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.

9. "Historical Information: FDA Issues Letters...", <http://bit.ly/2rkvR5s>.