

EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE HARMED BY MEDICATIONS BOUGHT ONLINE (2008-2015)

On April 12, 2015, Eloise Parry died after consuming “diet pills” that she purchased over the Internet. The police are investigating the case and believe the pills contain the highly toxic substance, dinitrophenol or DNP.¹

Emily-Sue Thomas, 18, became violently ill after taking a weight-loss pill that she purchased online. Thomas said she became interested in the drug after viewing an advertisement on her Facebook page claiming that the drug was popular with celebrities.²

Michael Thompson, a Nova Scotia man, died on March 18, 2015, of an accidental overdose. Thompson was addicted to prescription drugs and his family received an alarming package in the mail just two days after his death. The envelope was from reChem Labs and contained what they thought was the drug equivalent to Avitan®, an anti-anxiety medicine. After analysis, it was found to be Etizolam®, a drug 10 times more potent than Valium®. Etizolam® is not approved for sale in either the U.S. or Canada.³

On January, 3, 2015, Kelly Best, a 19-year-old man, died after taking counterfeit OxyContin® that contained a high dose of a different drug. Best is the third person in Saskatoon to be killed by the pills within 6 months according to Canadian police.⁴

In November 2014, Aidan Karpenko, 19, was found dead just hours after taking a single Etizolam® pill that was purchased by his friend on the Internet. Etizolam® is a medication used to treat anxiety, insomnia and panic attacks. The drug is not licensed or regulated in the UK; however, it is licensed in Japan and India.⁵

On April 23, 2013, Sarah Houston, a 23-year old medical student in the United Kingdom obsessed with her weight, purchased DNP®, a deadly diet pill, through an online drug seller. The pill, sold as a weight loss aid through many illicit online pharmacies, is actually a pesticide with lethal consequences to humans. Ms. Houston died the day after a bout of breathlessness, icteric sclera and hyperthermia, symptoms she had previously experienced.⁶

On April 4, 2012, a mother and son in Los Angeles were looking for cold medication. They purchased and fell victim to a counterfeit drug "vitamin injection." The victim's heart rate increased rapidly, experienced severe headaches, dramatic weight loss, pass-outs and numbness in lips. The victim was eventually hospitalized.⁷

¹ "Warnings after student 'diet-pills' death", Yahoo! News, April 21, 2015

² "Health professionals urge the public to steer clear of 'dangerous' online slimming pills", Wales Online, March 26, 2015

³ "Research chemicals' making their way into illicit drug markets, police say", Yahoo! News, October 1, 2015

⁴ "Counterfeit OxyContin claims another life in Canada", Securing Industry, January 12, 2015

⁵ "One pill can kill' warning after death of popular Chesterfield teen", Derbyshire Times, November 27, 2014

⁶ "Banned slimming drug kills medical student: Coroner attacks online dealers who target the vulnerable", The Daily Mail, April 22, 2013

⁷ "Cracking Down on Counterfeit Drugs" San Diego Union-Tribune, April 4, 2012

On June 3, 2011, an emergency room doctor from Texas suffered a stroke from ingesting counterfeit Alli® from www.2daydietsshopping.com. The counterfeit Alli® was produced using the controlled substance sibutramine, rather than the approved ingredient orlistat, and then shipped to the U.S. for redistribution.⁸

In January of 2010, 150 patients were admitted to hospitals in Singapore after taking counterfeit Tadalafil® and herbal preparations that claimed to cure erectile dysfunction. Seven (7) of the patients were comatose and four (4) subsequently died from the online drugs which contained powerful ingredients used to treat diabetes.⁹

Steven Kovacs was a 22-year old aspiring psychologist in New York when he started buying medication online after first being prescribed Adderall®, used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and Xanax®, used to treat anxiety. Steven died of a prescription drug overdose on July 8, 2009 after mixing, Adderall®, Xanax® and OxyContin®.¹⁰

On May 22, 2008, a man from Wichita, Kansas died from an accidental overdose of muscle relaxants he received from an online pharmacy. He obtained these drugs without ever visiting a doctor. The man's wife described her husband as "an addict --and that the Internet sites that sold him the drugs were his pushers."¹¹

Marcia Bergeron, a Canadian resident and US citizen, died in 2006 from heavy metal poisoning caused by the contaminated prescription medications she had purchased from an illicit online pharmacy. Otherwise healthy, the coroner determined that Bergeron died of cardiac arrhythmia caused by metal toxicity from counterfeit medication. According to the coroner, the website where Marcia bought her medicines looked reputable as did the box of pills, but the drugs were actually shipped from overseas and had high levels of lead, titanium, and arsenic, which caused her death.¹²

On December 17, 2006, Craig Schmidt, a 30-year-old plastics salesman, purchased Xanax® (an anxiety drug) and Ultram® (a painkiller) from an online drug seller without seeing or speaking to the doctor that prescribed the medications. After taking the drugs, he nearly died and has been left permanently impaired with brain damage that inhibits him from driving or even walking without stumbling.¹³

On February 12, 2001, U.S. citizen Ryan Haight died from adverse reactions to painkillers that he purchased over the Internet. He was only required to fill out a questionnaire that was "examined" by a doctor who had never met him.¹⁴

Before you buy medicines online, look for .pharmacy in the website address; these websites have been approved as safe and legal through the NABP's .Pharmacy Verified Websites Program. Or visit www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy to verify that the online pharmacy you are ordering from is safe.

⁸ "June 3, 2011: Chinese National Sentenced to Federal Prison for Trafficking Counterfeit Pharmaceutical Weight Loss Drug", U.S. Department of Justice, June 3, 2011

⁹ "Counterfeit Internet Drugs Pose Significant Risks and Discourage Vital Health Checks," Science Daily, January 20, 2010.

¹⁰ "Mom, Schumer urge Web Pharmacy Crackdown," Newsday, United States, July 10, 2011

¹¹ "Widow: My Husband Died from Online Drugs", CNN, May 22, 2008

¹² "Counterfeit Pills Bought Online Leads to Death, Coroner Confirms," The Times Colonist, July 6, 2007

¹³ "Online Extra: The Deadly Side Effects of Net Pharmacies", Bloomberg Businessweek, December 18, 2006

¹⁴ "Don't underestimate the danger of drugs from abroad" San Diego Union-Tribune, February 25, 2011