

## EXAMPLES OF PATIENTS HARMED BY MEDICATIONS PURCHASED ONLINE

### *ASOP Global – June 2020*

These are just a few illustrations, in chronological order, of the serious and growing global problem of illegal online drug sellers.

1. 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.<sup>1</sup>
2. 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.<sup>2</sup>
3. 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.<sup>3</sup>
4. 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."<sup>4</sup>
5. 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

<sup>1</sup> “Experimentation Turns Deadly for One Teenager,” Washington Post (October 21, 2003); available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/28/AR2007062801395.html?noredirect=on>

<sup>2</sup> “Online Extra: The Deadly Side Effects of Net Pharmacies” Bloomberg Businessweek (December 18, 2006); available at <http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2006-12-17/online-extra-the-deadly-side-effects-of-net-pharmacies>

<sup>3</sup> “Counterfeit Pills Bought Online Leads to Death, Coroner Confirms,” The Times Colonist (July 6, 2007); available at <http://www.canada.com/victoriatimescolonist/news/story.html?id=05142ca2-9796-4868-bf42-76e939915fa5&k=29039>. This medicine was contaminated with significantly high levels of metal.

<sup>4</sup> “Widow: My Husband Died from Online Drugs” CNN (May 22, 2008); available at <http://www.cnn.com/2008/HEALTH/05/21/online.drugs/index.html?ref=allsearch>. This drug was misused and abused. The medicine was purchased online without a doctor’s visit or a prescription.

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.<sup>5</sup>

6. 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.<sup>16</sup>
7. 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 US for redistribution. Two individuals operated the site. The first is a Chinese citizen who has been sentenced to 7 years in federal prison, \$504,815.39 in restitution to victims, and deportation following his sentence. The second US citizen received 3-years probation.<sup>7</sup>
8. 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.<sup>8</sup>
9. 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.<sup>9</sup>
10. 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.<sup>10</sup>
11. 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.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Mom, Schumer urge Web Pharmacy Crackdown," *Newsday*, United States (July 10, 2011); available at <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/mom-schumer-urge-web-pharmacy-crackdown-1.3016581>. This medicine was obtained without a prescription and was abused because online prescription drugs were easily accessible.

<sup>6</sup> "Counterfeit Internet Drugs Pose Significant Risks and Discourage Vital Health Checks," *Science Daily* (January 20, 2010). <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/01/100120085348.htm>. This contaminated medicine, claimed to cure erectile dysfunction contained a powerful drug used to treat diabetes.

<sup>7</sup> "June 3, 2011: Chinese National Sentenced to Federal Prison for Trafficking Counterfeit Pharmaceutical Weight Loss Drug" U.S. Department of Justice (June 3, 2011); available at <http://www.fda.gov/ICECI/CriminalInvestigations/ucm257912.htm>. This medicine was contaminated with significantly high levels of metal. The patient suffered a stroke after ingesting the medication.

<sup>8</sup> "Cracking Down on Counterfeit Drugs" *San Diego Union-Tribune* (April 4, 2012); available at <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2012/apr/04/cracking-down-counterfeit-drugs/?page=1#article>. This medicine was contaminated.

<sup>9</sup> "Banned slimming drug kills medical student: Coroner attacks online dealers who target the vulnerable" *The Daily Mail*, United Kingdom (April 22, 2013); available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2312986/Sarah-Houston-Banned-slimming-drug-DNP-kills-medical-student-coroner-attacks-online-dealers-target-vulnerable.html>. This medicine was misused. The patient took both anti-depressants and a pill marketed as a weight loss aid containing lethal ingredients.

<sup>10</sup> "One pill can kill" warning after death of popular Chesterfield teen" *Derbyshire Times* (November 27, 2014); available at <http://www.derbyshiretimes.co.uk/news/grassroots/one-pill-can-kill-warning-after-death-of-popular-chesterfield-teen-1-6973111>.

<sup>11</sup> "Counterfeit OxyContin claims another life in Canada" *Securing Industry* (January 12, 2015); available at <http://www.securindustry.com/pharmaceuticals/counterfeit-oxycontin-claims-another-life-in-canada/s40/a2233/#.VoBtZVjmo-x>.

12. 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.<sup>14</sup>
13. 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.<sup>13</sup>
14. 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.<sup>12</sup>
15. David Connell, 21, died after taking too much etizolam, which is approved in Japan and India but banned for human use in most of Europe. Mr. Connell had bought the drug online from a Scottish company for £43 a few days before his death, after researching tips to help anxiety on the internet. After his body was discovered, police found a clear bag labelled ‘etizolam: reagent only. Not for human consumption’ in his bin, along with a blue, granular substance around his body. The drug is up to ten times more powerful than diazepam.<sup>15</sup>
16. In February 2017, 21-year-old Bethany Shipsey died after consuming 2,4-dinitrophenol (DNP), an industrial strength pesticide, that was purchased from an online site.<sup>16</sup>
17. Over a two week period in late 2017, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations was able to identify seven confirmed synthetic opioid-related deaths that were linked back to online sellers of illicit narcotics. The report outlines the death of a 49-year-old Ohio resident that purchased roughly \$2,500 of synthetic opioids from an online seller over a 10 month period, receiving eighteen packages in total. The cause of death for this Ohioan, according to the autopsy report, was “acute fentanyl intoxication.” In addition, a Michigan man sent \$400 to an online seller in late 2016 and received several packages believed to be synthetic opioids. According to the report, just one day before his death, this individual died of an accidental overdose of multiple drugs, including a fentanyl analogue.<sup>17</sup>
18. On March 28, 2018, 34-year-old Brian Parker and 30-year-old Victoria Koleski of Long Island City, New York plead guilty to their roles in distributing synthetic opioids that resulted in the death of

14 “Health professionals urge the public to steer clear of ‘dangerous’ online slimming pills” Wales Online (March 26, 2015); available at <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/health-professionals-urge-public-steer-8926003>.

13 “Warnings after student ‘diet-pills’ death” Yahoo! News (April 21, 2015); available at <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/warnings-student-diet-pills-death-092436702.html#RFWMuwe>.

12 “‘Research chemicals’ making their way into illicit drug markets, police say” Yahoo! News (October 1, 2015); available at <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/research-chemicals-making-way-illicit-090000428.html>.

15 ‘First Class’ Student Died After Taking Anti-Depressants Bought Online to Combat Exam Stress (January 22, 2016); available at <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/first-class-student-died-after-7223588>.

16 “Much-Loved Daughter Bethany Shipsey Overdoses on Online Diet Pills (January 8, 2018); available at <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/much-loved-daughter-bethany-shipsey-14127508>.

17 Combatting the Opioid Crisis: Exploiting Vulnerabilities in International Mail – Staff Report (January 2018); available at <http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/download/psi-report-combatting-the-opioid-crisis>.

a customer in Madison, Wisconsin. These substances were purchased through two of Parker's online companies, Unbeatablechems and RC Powders.<sup>18</sup>

19. On April 11, 2018, documented Lakeside gang member Uriah Odish was indicted by a federal grand jury for selling fentanyl that led to the death of a 25-year-old La Mesa woman. Odish is the fourth person since January to be charged in the Southern District in California with Distribution of Fentanyl Resulting in Death.<sup>19</sup>
20. On April 25, 2018, 32 individuals were charged with participating in a fentanyl trafficking conspiracy that caused death. Sergio Martinez of Lawrence, Massachusetts, one of the conspiracy's leaders, was charged with aiding and abetting a distribution of fentanyl that resulted in death.<sup>20</sup>
21. On May 21, 2018, Vincent Koh, M.D., and his wife and office manager Milly Koh of Poughkeepsie, New York, were sentenced for delivering misbranded and foreign oncology drugs to their patients. The couple purchased the unapproved drugs from a foreign source with improper labeling and administered them to cancer patients.<sup>21</sup>
22. On July 13, 2018, CanadaDrugs.com is scheduled to shut down after investigators found that the site was selling two counterfeit cancer drugs with no active ingredient.<sup>22</sup>
23. Two people in Akron, Ohio fatally overdosed on Acetyl fentanyl purchased through one of the Zheng drug trafficking organization's many online companies. Two Chinese nationals were charged for running the global drug trafficking ring and importing controlled substances into the United States.<sup>23</sup>
24. 200,000 people die every year from counterfeit or substandard anti-malarial drugs, 160,000 of which are from sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these fake medicines originate in India or China.<sup>24</sup>
25. It was determined that a man responsible for distributing opioids that resulted in several overdose deaths in northeastern Ohio in 2016 had ordered the drugs from a Chinese website and was redistributing them from one of his online companies.<sup>25</sup>

18 DOJ Press Release: "New York Man Admits Distributing Synthetic Drug Leading to Overdose Death" (March 28, 2018); available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-nj/pr/new-york-man-admits-distributing-synthetic-drug-leading-overdose-death>

19 DOJ Press Release: "Lakeside Gang Member Indicted in Fentanyl Overdose Death" (April 11, 2018); available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdca/pr/lakeside-gang-member-indicted-fentanyl-overdose-death>

20 DOJ Press Release: "Members of Fentanyl Trafficking Conspiracy Charged with Drug Distribution Resulting in Death, Money Laundering, and Firearms Offenses" (July 13, 2018) available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-nh/pr/members-fentanyl-trafficking-conspiracy-charged-drug-distribution-resulting-death-money>

21 DOJ Press Release: "Oncologist and Office Manager Sentenced in Connection with Administering Unapproved, Foreign Drugs" (May 21, 2018) available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndny/pr/oncologist-and-office-manager-sentenced-connection-administering-unapproved-foreign>

22 ABC11.com: "I-Team: Online Pharmacy Shutting Down After Selling Fake Cancer Drugs," (July 9, 2018) available at <https://abc11.com/health/i-team-online-pharmacy-shutting-down-after-selling-fake-cancer-drugs/3733321/>

23 DOJ Press Release: "Two Chinese Nationals Charged With Operating Global Opioid and Drug Manufacturing Conspiracy Resulting in Deaths" (August 22, 2018) available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-chinese-nationals-charged-operating-global-opioid-and-drug-manufacturing-conspiracy>

24 TheConversation.com: "Fake drugs are one reason malaria still kills so many," (April 24, 2018) available at <https://theconversation.com/fake-drugs-are-one-reason-malaria-still-kills-so-many-92712>

25 VOANews.com: "Chinese Businessman Pleads Guilty of Importing Opioids," (August 7, 2018) available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/chinese-businessman-bin-wang-pleads-guilty-to-importing-opioids/4517815.html>

26. In October 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a 43-count indictment filed against a 35-year-old man and his 62-year-old father who live in Shanghai and are accused of engaging in a conspiracy to manufacture and ship 250 types of synthetic narcotics globally and that drugs they sold are directly responsible for two overdose deaths in Akron, Ohio. The pair also sold fake drugs, including cancer medication that was actually bath salts, Sessions said.<sup>27</sup>
27. The Portland Police Bureau warned the community about the danger of purchasing prescription drugs from black market dealers and unlicensed distributors following a discovery of counterfeit pills laced with heroin, fentanyl, tramadol, alprazolam and other substances contributing to the city's increase in overdose deaths.<sup>28</sup>
28. In November 2018, in the state of Iowa, various drug-related deaths have been linked to three vendors on the darknet. Three men have been sentenced to lengthy stays in prison for causing the deaths of three Iowa residents. Each of these men operated on the dark web and specialized in the sale of opioids.<sup>29</sup>
29. In Northern Ireland, deaths associated with the anti-anxiety drug brand Xanax has been sharply rising over a three-year period. The drug was named on one death certificate in 2015, rising to 26 appearances on death certificates by the end of 2017. The drug is not available on the NHS and can only be obtained through private prescriptions in the UK. One of the victims had purchased the drug online from Syria, with others purchasing from China, Eastern Europe and Africa.<sup>30</sup>
30. In December 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new data that shows over 70,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2017 alone.<sup>31</sup>
31. In December 2018, Toronto police announced that police officers had identified a new synthetic opioid called U-48800 during an unrelated search of a west-end Toronto home two months earlier. Opioids killed more than 2,000 people in Canada from January to June of 2018, with fentanyl and its analogues contributing to more than 70 percent of those deaths.<sup>32</sup>

27 U.S. Department of Justice: "Two Chinese Nationals Charged With Operating Global Opioid and Drug Manufacturing Conspiracy Resulting in Deaths" (August 22, 2018) available at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-chinese-nationals-charged-operating-global-opioid-and-drug-manufacturing-conspiracy>

28 KVAL: "Portland Police Bureau Warns Public of Counterfeit Prescription Drugs" (August 17, 2018) available at: <https://kval.com/news/local/portland-police-bureau-warns-public-of-counterfeit-prescription-drugs>

29 NullTX: "3 Darknet Vendors Causing Drug-Related Deaths in Iowa Sentenced to Severe Jail Time," (November 8, 2018) available at: <https://nulltx.com/3-darknet-vendors-causing-drug-related-deaths-in-iowa-sentenced-to-severe-jail-time/>

30 Belfast Telegraph: "Coroner's Concern Over Alarming Increase in Xanax-Linked Deaths in Northern Ireland" (December 13, 2018) available at: <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/coroners-concern-over-alarming-increase-in-xanaxlinked-deaths-in-northern-ireland-37621160.html>

31 Yahoo: "Trump Calls China's Criminalization of Fentanyl a 'Game Changer' for the Opioid Epidemic – but is it?" (December 5, 2018) available at: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/trump-calls-chinas-criminalization-fentanyl-game-changer-opioid-epidemic-194438139.html>

32 The Globe and Mail: "Street Drug Found in Toronto Linked to Overdose Deaths Worldwide: Health Canada," (December 30, 2018) available at: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/toronto/article-street-drug-found-in-toronto-linked-to-overdose-deaths-worldwide/>

32. In February 2019, it was determined that fake Valium pills sold online at a fraction of the cost were responsible for a 43 percent rise in the number of drug overdose deaths in Glasgow between January and October 2018.<sup>33</sup>
33. In February 2019, it was stated that young people from schools and universities across the UK were using a fake version of the drug Xanax, which they were purchasing online. A study done by BBC South East in 2018 revealed that Xanax was being sold illegally to children on social media sites, and charity Addaction said that children as young as 13 had purchased Xanax on the internet. Over 200 deaths in the UK were linked to misuse of versions of the drug since 2015, some of which were possibly laced with fentanyl.<sup>33</sup>
34. In March 2019, UK coroners demanded urgent official action against laws allowing online pharmacies to sell patients large quantities of potentially lethal prescription drugs after linking 12 deaths to medicine ordered online. Under legal loopholes, patients must simply submit an online form, receive a prescription generated by a computer and signed off by a doctor from another country, allowing a UK pharmacy to legally dispense the drugs. One recent death involves an individual who was able to purchase 3,700 codeine tablets from 21 UK registered online pharmacies.<sup>34</sup>
35. In March 2019, a report from the World Health Organization stated that hundreds of thousands of children each year are dying due to a surge of substandard or counterfeit medicines for treating conditions like malaria, pneumonia and other diseases. According to Dr. Joel Breman, co-author of the report and senior scientific adviser emeritus at the Fogarty International Center of the US National Institutes of Health, “We’re talking about 300,000 – at least – children who have died because of murder-by-alleged-medicines distributed by criminals.”<sup>35</sup>
36. In March 2019, the Washington Post ran a piece about the Obama administration’s handling of the opioid crisis which read that “Between 2013 and 2017, more than 67,000 people died of - synthetic-opioid-related overdoses — exceeding the number of U.S. military personnel killed during the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined. The number of deaths, the vast majority from fentanyl, has risen sharply each year. In 2017, synthetic opioids were to blame for 28,869 out of the overall 47,600 opioid overdoses, a 46.4 percent increase over the previous year, when fentanyl became the leading cause of overdose deaths in America for the first time.”<sup>36</sup>

33 The Guardian: “Fake Valium is Killing Those Who Buy Pills Online, Charity Warns,” (February 3, 2019) available at; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/feb/03/fake-valium-increase-drugs-deaths>

33 The Badger Online: “Young People Across the UK Taking ‘Fake Xanax’,” (February 26, 2019) available at; <http://thebadgeronline.com/2019/02/young-people-across-uk-taking-fake-xanax/>

34 The Express: “Watchdog to Put a Stop to Buying of Deadly Opioids Via the Internet,” (March 10, 2019) available at; <https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/1098296/health-watchdog-opioids-sale-internet-prescription-drugs>

35 CNN: “Global ‘Pandemic’ of Fake Drugs Killing Children Worldwide, Report Says,” (March 12, 2019) available at; <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/11/health/fake-drugs-killing-children-study/index.html>

36 The Washington Post: “The Fentanyl Failure,” (March 13, 2019) available at; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/fentanyl-epidemic-obama-administration/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.2b89b53d0467](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/fentanyl-epidemic-obama-administration/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2b89b53d0467)

37. In April 2019, former Pharmakon Pharmaceuticals CEO Paul J. Elmer, 67, of Fishers, was convicted of conspiracy to defraud the federal government and adulterating drugs. Elmer's company distributed over-and-under-potent drugs to hospitals across the country, at one time shipping 2,460 percent super-potent morphine sulfate that was administered to infants, resulting in some overdoses.<sup>37</sup>
38. Last summer, 18-year-old Sam Foulkes from Buckden in Cambridge died after taking medication to help him relax, which turned out to be counterfeit pills normally licensed to treat patients with pain or anxiety.<sup>38</sup>
39. In April 2019, drug dealer Trevon Atone Lucas pleaded guilty in federal court, admitting that he sold counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl to a La Jolla man after being warned of the overdose risk, causing his overdose death last year.<sup>39</sup>
40. In May 2019, federal agents broke up a massive pill-making operation in Stockton that was responsible for selling thousands of tablets containing fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine. The operation was linked to an investigation of 52 fentanyl overdoses in the Sacramento area in 2016, 12 of which resulted in death.<sup>40</sup>
41. In August 2019, a Chinese national at the center of an international drug trafficking investigation was named a drug kingpin after being indicted in 2017 for selling and shipping massive quantities of fentanyl that killed and injured people in several states.<sup>41</sup>
42. In October 2019, an Iraqi citizen who came to the United States in 2012 was indicted for leading an organization that distributed hundreds of thousands of pills laced with fentanyl in the United States, one of which killed 20-year-old marine corporal Mark Mambulao.<sup>42</sup>

37 Indianapolis Star: "Ex-CEO of Noblesville Pharmaceutical Firm That Sold Drugs That Sickened Babies Convicted" (April 11, 2019) available at: <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2019/04/11/ex-ceo-pharmakon-pharmaceuticals-paul-j-elmer-convicted-defrauding-fda/3441104002/>

38 ITV News: "Warning of Dangers of Taking Prescription Drugs Not Meant for You," (April 17, 2019) available at: <https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2019-04-17/warning-of-dangers-of-taking-prescription-drugs-not-meant-for-you/>

39 Department of Justice: "Online Drug Dealer Pleads Guilty in Fentanyl Overdose Death," (April 23, 2019) available at: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdca/pr/online-drug-dealer-pleads-guilty-fentanyl-overdose-death>

40 The Sacramento Bee: "Did DEA Find the Maker of Fentanyl That Killed 12 and Overdosed Dozens in Sacramento?" (May 16, 2019) available at: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article230497104.html>

41 WLOX: "Chinese National Indicted in South Mississippi Case Named Drug Kingpin by U.S. Government," (August 22, 2019) available at: <https://www.wlox.com/2019/08/22/chinese-national-indicted-south-mississippi-case-named-drug-kingpin-by-us-government/>

42 K TSA: "Former Iraqi Interpreter For U.S. Military Forces Gets 30 Years For Selling Fentanyl-Laced Pills," (October 3, 2019) available at: <https://www.ksa.com/former-interpreter-for-u-s-military-heads-to-prison-for-drug-trafficking/>

43. In October 2019, a man and woman pleaded guilty to selling thousands of fentanyl pills on dark web marketplace “Dream Market.” One of the defendants admitted selling the fentanyl that killed a woman in San Diego in 2017.<sup>43</sup>
44. In October 2019, three Chinese nationals using the alias “Alex” on various websites were indicted for selling and distributing synthetic opioids throughout the United States, causing the overdose death of five American individuals.<sup>44</sup>
45. In March 2020, an unnamed defendant was charged with operating a fraudulent website called “coronavirusmedialkit.com,” which was offering consumers what they claimed were selling World Health Organization (WHO) approved vaccine kits in exchange for credit card information. There is currently no legitimate vaccine for COVID-19.<sup>45</sup>
46. In March 2020, law enforcement agencies taking part in Operation Pangea found 2,000 links to websites advertising items related to COVID-19 and seized more than 34,000 counterfeit and substandard masks, medication, and preventatives. Interpol’s Secretary General Jürgen Stock said these counterfeit products show “total disregard for people’s wellbeing, or their lives.”<sup>46</sup>
47. In March 2020, the OECD-EUIPO study “Trade in Counterfeit Pharmaceutical Products” reported that “estimates show that between 72,000 and 169,000 children may die from pneumonia every year after receiving counterfeit drugs, and that fake anti-malarial medication might be responsible for an additional 116,000 deaths.”<sup>47</sup>
48. In April 2020, a Carmel Valley physician was charged with fraud after he was found to be offering a COVID-19 “miracle cure” that he claimed was 100 percent effective at making a person immune to the disease for six weeks and could kill the disease if a person had already contracted it, a claim that puts people’s health in danger.<sup>48</sup>
49. In April 2020, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations announced that in Operation Stolen Promise, law enforcement seized \$3 million in illicit proceeds, over 11,000 COVID-19 related domain names, and 225 shipments of mislabeled, fraudulent, unauthorized, or prohibited COVID-19 test kits, treatments, and PPE.<sup>49</sup>
50. In April 2020, the U.S. Department of Justice entered a permanent injunction against an “ozone therapy” center in Dallas, Texas which claimed that their ozone therapy treatment was safe

43 Saint Louis Post Dispatch: “Second ‘Drug Llama’ Defendant Admits Selling Fentanyl on the Dark Web,” (October 31, 2019) available at; [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/second-drug-llama-defendant-admits-selling-fentanyl-on-the-dark/article\\_cea16730-72bf-54aa-8f98-49c77bd5d339.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/second-drug-llama-defendant-admits-selling-fentanyl-on-the-dark/article_cea16730-72bf-54aa-8f98-49c77bd5d339.html)

44 U.S. Department of Justice: “Three Chinese National Using the Alias “Alex” Indicted in the United States for Conspiring to Import and Distribute Deadly Opioids,” (October 1, 2019) available at; <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edpa/pr/three-chinese-nationals-using-alias-alex-indicted-united-states-conspiring-import-and>



even for children and could combat other diseases like cancer, SARS and Ebola despite warnings that these treatments could be dangerous.<sup>50</sup>

51. In April 2020, a San Jose man faced murder charges after selling counterfeit opioid pills containing fentanyl to an 18-year-old woman and her boyfriend, which caused both individuals to overdose and resulted in the young woman's death.<sup>51</sup>

52. In June 2020, a federal court issued a temporary restraining order against a man offering fraudulent coronavirus treatments on his website "whiteeaglenativeherbs.net" after the man guaranteed to an undercover special agent that his hospitalized grandmother would not die after taking the medicine.<sup>52</sup>

53. As of June 3, 2020, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission reports that, 62,460 Americans have reported over \$45 million in fraud loss since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>53</sup>

45 U.S. Department of Justice: "Justice Department Files Its First Enforcement Action Against COVID-19 Fraud," (March 22, 2020) available at; <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-its-first-enforcement-action-against-covid-19-fraud>

46 Interpol: "Global Operation Sees a Rise in Fake Medical Products Related to COVID-19," (March 19, 2020) available at; <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/Global-operation-sees-a-rise-in-fake-medical-products-related-to-COVID-19>

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