



8401 West Dodge Road • Suite 115 • Omaha, NE 68114 • 1-800-222-1222 • 402-955-5555 • [www.NebraskaPoison.com](http://www.NebraskaPoison.com)

Serving Nebraska, Idaho, American Samoa, and the Federated States of Micronesia

From: Ron Kirschner, MD, Medical Director  
To: ALL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS  
Subject: Counterfeit pills containing fentanyl analogs  
Date: 6/16/17

---

- **This month an outbreak of serious opioid toxicity associated with counterfeit Percocet involving over 40 individuals was reported in Georgia. The state crime lab identified the designer opioid U-47700 and cyclopropyl fentanyl in the pills (Georgia poison center, personal communication).**
- Because of its higher potency, fentanyl-contaminated or fentanyl-substituted heroin has been associated with clusters of opioid fatalities throughout the country.
- Fentanyl analogs are now being found with increasing frequency in counterfeit oral medications sold on the street.
- In 2015 five California patients had prolonged coma after ingesting “Xanax” pills purchased illicitly. Fentanyl blood or urine levels were documented in 4 of them. The pills, which appeared similar to Xanax 2 mg, were found to contain fentanyl and the benzodiazepine-like sedative etizolam (Arens).
- A CA patient developed profound coma after ingesting Norco purchased on the street. Supratherapeutic serum fentanyl levels were documented, but the pills were unavailable for analysis (Armenian).
- Since 2014, there have been multiple seizures of counterfeit prescription pills containing fentanyl analogs in various regions of the country. Devices for producing look-alike pills are relatively inexpensive, and can generate huge profits for drug traffickers (DEA).
- Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids will not be detected by standard opiate screens.
- Treatment of suspected fentanyl intoxication should include naloxone and supportive care, with intubation and mechanical ventilation as needed.
- Because the kinetics of fentanyl analogs and other designer opioids can vary, and naloxone’s duration of action is short, patients are likely to need repeat dosing.

#### References

Arens A. Adverse effects from counterfeit alprazolam tablets. *JAMA Intern Med* 2016; 176: 1554.

Armenian P. Fentanyl and a novel synthetic opioid U-47700 masquerading as “Norco”. *Ann Emerg Med* 2017; 69: 87.

DEA. Counterfeit prescription pills containing fentanyl: A global threat, July 2016.

<https://www.dea.gov/druginfo/fentanyl.shtml>

**Our certified nurse specialists in poison information and physician toxicologists  
are available 24 hours a day to answer your questions.**