

Fake Rx in Indiana: Carfentanil and Fentanyl found in Purported Oxycodone Pills

This DEA Bulletin is based on preliminary reporting and may be subject to updating as additional information becomes available.

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Event

A recent enforcement operation by the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) Indianapolis District Office (IDO) resulted in the seizure of 970 purported prescription pills that were various shades of blue and appeared to be oxycodone. Laboratory analysis subsequently revealed that the pills were counterfeit; the dark blue pills contained carfentanil and the light blue pills contained fentanyl. Fentanyl is a Schedule II opioid analgesic approximately 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. Carfentanil is a Schedule II substance, similar in structure to fentanyl, with an analgesic potency 10,000 times that of morphine and is used in veterinary practice to immobilize certain large animals, including elephants. Both can be fatal in very small amounts.

Significance

Based on information from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD), this is the first time carfentanil has been encountered by the IMPD crime laboratory. The presence of carfentanil and fentanyl presents a serious safety issue for law enforcement officials and personnel due to their extreme toxicity. Carfentanil and fentanyl pressed to resemble counterfeit prescription pills also present a serious safety issue to individuals who are illegally purchasing these pills as they may not be aware they are actually ingesting carfentanil and/or fentanyl. The ingestion of or accidental exposure to these highly potent drugs could result in a rash of overdose incidents or deaths throughout the Indianapolis area. At this time, the IDO is not aware of any overdoses related to these particular counterfeit pills.

Details

In May 2017, an IDO enforcement operation resulted in the arrest of five armed felons and the seizure of approximately 970 prescription pills; gram amounts of heroin and methamphetamine; 1 pound of marijuana; five firearms; and a stolen vehicle. This investigation was a joint operation with the Federal Bureau



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of Investigation; the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Homeland Security Investigations; the Internal Revenue Service; and IMPD.

The seized pills were various shades of blue and appeared to be oxycodone. However, based on a subsequent mass spectrometry analysis by the IMPD crime laboratory, the dark blue pills resulted in a presumptive positive match for carfentanil and the lighter blue pills tested positive for the presence of fentanyl—but not carfentanil. Preliminary results reveal the presence of fentanyl, but further analysis is required to determine if it is fentanyl or a fentanyl-related compound. The IMPD crime laboratory did not conduct additional analysis on the carfentanil pills as it does not possess the necessary equipment to safely analyze this drug.

(U) Figure 1. Seized counterfeit oxycodone pills actually containing fentanyl.



Source: Indianapolis-Marion County Forensic Services Agency

(U) Figure 2. Seized counterfeit oxycodone pills found to contain carfentanil.



Source: Indianapolis-Marion County Forensic Services Agency

This bulletin serves as a reminder that all law enforcement officers and personnel should exercise extreme caution when encountering any suspected controlled substances during enforcement operations. Officers should continue to follow appropriate safety guidelines and wear the appropriate level of personal protective equipment when encountering any suspected fentanyl-related controlled substances. Officers are strongly encouraged to read DEA's recently-released Briefing Guide for First Responders which addresses many of these issues -

https://www.dea.gov/druginfo/Fentanyl_BriefingGuideforFirstResponders_June2017.pdf

This product was prepared by the DEA Chicago Field Division. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at dea.onsi@usdoj.gov. For media/press inquiries call (202) 307-7977.



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