US Deaths From Overdoses Involving Fake Pills Have Increased

Overdose deaths with evidence of counterfeit pill use increased to 4.7% in the US by the end of 2021, up from 2% in 2019, according to an analysis of 106,293 overdose deaths across 30 jurisdictions. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl and counterfeit oxycodone were most often involved in overdose deaths with evidence of counterfeit substances.

A rise in overdose deaths involving counterfeit drugs in the western part of the country drove the increase.

The findings suggest that overdose prevention messaging should emphasize the danger in obtaining pills without a prescription, and should encourage the use of drug checking services such as fentanyl test strips, researchers wrote in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

The study followed an announcement by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that $279 million had been awarded to 49 states and 40 local health departments to help prevent drug overdoses.

- Emily Harris

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Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.