

**Remarks by DEA Acting Assistant Administrator Timothy McDermott at the National  
Healthcare Fraud Takedown Press Conference**

**September 30, 2020**

*(Remarks as prepared for delivery)*

Good morning. I would first like to thank our partners who led this effort. The Drug Enforcement Administration is proud to partner with each of you.

For more than a decade, our nation has been plagued by the devastating opioid crisis, which we know was largely created by the over-prescribing of opioid medication and is now being driven by illicit fentanyl.

Due to the efforts of DEA and our partners, from January 2017 through August 2020, we have seen the number of opioid prescriptions drop nearly 37 percent, a reduction in over 47 percent of opioids dispensed, and most importantly -- an 18 percent drop in prescription overdose deaths over the last two years.

Additionally, since 2016, DEA has reduced the amount of opioids manufacturers produced by a proposed 60 percent, while continuing to ensure there are adequate supplies in hospitals nationwide to support patients suffering from COVID-19.

There is still much more work to be done. 2019 preliminary data suggests nearly 70 percent of overdose deaths in the United States were opioid-related.

DEA understands the pivotal role we play in addressing this ongoing crisis and we use every tool at our disposal – administrative, civil, and criminal – to ensure the agency’s 1.9 million registrants who handle prescription drugs comply with the law, while safeguarding patient access to legitimate and necessary prescription medications.

We know that if we prevent the diversion of prescription medication, we can reduce the number of people *who become introduced to them*.

In addition to our supporting role in the Health Care Fraud component of this takedown, DEA’s nationwide regional efforts comprised of multiple investigations across the United States, resulting in more than 32 cases, 32 search warrants and 57 arrests.

Targets of these investigations included medical practitioners, pharmacies, and other individuals, who we believe were contributing to *these* sinister schemes.

To understand the magnitude and scope of the fraud exposed during this initiative, I want to highlight a case out of Fort Worth, Texas.

This was an intricate diversion scheme that stretched across multiple states and attributed to approximately \$18 million dollars in controlled substances distributed for illicit use.

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It's important to emphasize that our actions target unethical practitioners operating recklessly and putting patients at risk for their own personal gain.

The diversion of prescription opioids by a small number of practitioners--less than a fraction of a percent--have disproportionately impacted this epidemic.

DEA is dedicated to working with the vast majority of health care professionals that strive to provide the highest standard of care to their patients.

The brave men and women of the DEA remain committed to doing everything we can to address this threat.

We stand with our partners steadfast in protecting the health and safety of our communities and will continue to do our part to stop prescription drug diversion, prevent misuse, and end this devastating opioid crisis. Thank you.

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