

# Deadly painkillers posted in packs that beat scanners

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An addictive painkiller linked to a rising number of deaths is being posted to online buyers in packages that allegedly prevent it from being detected by airport scanners.

Overseas sellers are offering fentanyl, which is many times stronger than morphine, in tungsten and carbon packaging. Online pharmacies claim that this means it will “skip through customs x-ray machines at airports”.

Sellers on Silk Road, an Asian-based online drugs marketplace popular with UK customers, offer 800mcg tablets of Abstral-branded fentanyl for £3.10.

The outlet states that a “team of experts” prepares each parcel to avoid detection from x-ray machines. *The Times* has identified a number of other

foreign pharmacy websites attempting to entice UK customers with the promise of “detection proof” tungsten and carbon packaging.

This year’s Global Drug Survey said that 25 per cent of the UK’s illegal drug purchases were made online.

“The sellers are relying on the screener just not taking the time to investigate further,” Jeffrey Price, a security expert at Metropolitan State University of Denver, said. “The sites may be trying to convince customers that if they use the material in a certain way to conceal key elements, it may work in some cases.

“In certain countries, screeners will start to let stuff go through unless its an obvious weapon or dangerous device. Missing drugs is less important than missing something that could take down a plane, so it’s likely that customs

will allow some things to go without additional evaluation if the lines are getting long.”

Fentanyl was mentioned on ten death certificates in 2010 but on 34 in 2015, according to the latest Office for National Statistics figures. The drug, which was linked to the death of the musician Prince, is 100 times more potent than heroin.

The government’s drug strategy highlights the use of the internet to purchase illegal drugs and avoid detection. An intelligence unit focused on tackling the criminal use of the dark net is to be developed, the strategy says.

Deaths linked to fentanyl have risen to epidemic levels in Canada and the US. Fatal overdoses linked to the drug in British Columbia and Alberta in Canada have increased from 42 in 2012 to 418 in 2015.