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Discovery Education - Drug Prevention Video

"An Ounce of Prevention" Video Transcript:

To all of you, young and old, whose futures worth more than gold, listen closely. I'll unfold a truth that must be told. Counterfeit drugs, they do abound.

A danger lurking all around. Fentanyl, a poison found in pills that can't be sound. But fear not, we'll be okay.

Keeping ourselves out of harm's way. Empowered with knowledge, we'll take flight. And keep our futures shining bright.

So stand with me, my dear friends. Our voice is strong, we will defend. Our lives, our health, until the end.

A better world, we'll surely mend. We are now seizing fentanyl in all 50 states. And it is the deadliest drug threat our country has ever faced.

Counterfeit drugs, fentanyl. Maybe you know what these are, maybe you don't. These drugs are a big problem in our country.

Young people like us are dying. Is there anything we can do about it? Do each of us have a role to play in combating this epidemic? In today's virtual field trip, we'll hear from experts and individuals who have been impacted by this crisis. And they will share how we can join the fight, take action, and make a difference.

It's time we change the narrative surrounding counterfeit drugs and reclaim our futures. Welcome to an Ounce of Prevention virtual field trip. Today's virtual field trip is all about getting real on fake pills.

It's essential we have the facts to make smart choices when it comes to our health and safety. We all have big plans for our futures, and it's up to us to stay informed and aware. Organizations nationwide are working together to ensure counterfeit drugs, fake pills, and fentanyl don't take this away from us.

Hi, Sherry. So, would you mind telling us what fake pills are? Right now, we are seeing a huge quantity of these pills that look like real pharmaceutical pills, but they're not. They actually contain fentanyl, which is dangerous and deadly poison, inside these pills.

And is this a big problem in our area? This is an extraordinarily large problem throughout the United States, but really here in Arizona, it's incredible. DEA here in Arizona, with our state

and local partners, are seizing more than half of the fentanyl that's seized throughout the rest of the United States combined. In 2020, for instance, we seized 6 million fake pills.

And when I say we, I mean the Drug Enforcement Administration here in Arizona, along with our state, local, and federal partners. And we thought that was an extraordinary number. And at the time, in 2020, one out of every four pills we knew contained a lethal dose of fentanyl.

By 2021, we seized 12 million pills. And we also realized that the lethality rate for those pills went from one in four to two out of five. Last year, 2022, we seized 28 million fentanyl pills here in Arizona.

The science shows that 62% of those pills contains a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl. When we look at 28 million pills, and we know that 62% of those are lethal, we're looking at well over 15 million lives saved by ensuring that those pills never got sold here in the United States. Why is it you think that over the years the number just keeps doubling? In historical drug trafficking, cartels really focused on crops.

They harvested crops, they used growth cycles, they were dependent on weather and workers to ensure a product was delivered and then transported into the United States. The threat that is here right now is fentanyl and methamphetamine, and those are synthetic drugs. And these pill presses can run 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

So there's no way to quantify how many drugs are out in the world. But how do they actually get into our country? Every way that you could imagine. Trafficking drugs is a $3 trillion business in the United States.

They are bringing those drugs in by land, by sea, by air. The most common way is through ports of entry into the United States from Mexico. What's the DEA doing to fight back? So we work with our state, local, and federal partners on the law enforcement mission.

But now we're also coupling with coalitions throughout the United States. Do you work with any students like myself? Absolutely. It is so important to connect with our young people today.

It's important that you guys know about NARCAN and about the Good Samaritan Law. What is NARCAN? NARCAN is the brand name for naloxone. It is a reversal of opioids.

Sometimes you have to give more than one dose. And so it's very important that once you give somebody a dose of naloxone, you should stay with that person until medical help

arrives. We're also seeing now with a new emerging trend, xylosine is being mixed with fentanyl.

Now, xylosine is a large mammal tranquilizer, and the xylosine is not an opioid, but it does work as a depressant, so it will actually not be affected by naloxone. If you are thinking that you have a friend in distress who may be poisoned from fentanyl, please give them the naloxone. If they have not taken fentanyl and it was something else, it will not hurt them.

Well, I've heard of Good Samaritans before, but I didn't know there was a law around them. It's a Good Samaritan Law that protects people who are doing the right thing. We want you to save lives.

We want you to take every opportunity to save your friends. We want you not to take drugs, but if you make a bad decision, don't make it worse. Turn it around, administer naloxone, and call for help.

This problem just seems so big, it feels like there's almost nothing we can do. The biggest thing that you can do is educate yourself. Educate yourself and start talking about fentanyl.

Talk to your friends, talk to your neighbors, spread the word. We don't want you to lose your friends. We don't want you to lose your family.

We want to save lives. So here we are walking into our DEA vault in the Phoenix D.L. Division, and these are drugs that we seized just this week. So we have over a million fentanyl pills.

A million pills in one week? That's actually wild. Take a look at this. This is really what I want to show you.

These are pressed to look like oxycodones. So if you had a real oxycodone, and one of these that I'm telling you I know is fentanyl, you could not tell the difference. I can't tell the difference.

Nobody can tell the difference until you get to a lab and a chemist breaks open that pill and does a scientific analysis. That's the only way to find out if it contains a lethal dose. I want to show you these.

These are pill presses. These are small pill presses. This is a larger industrial-sized pill press.

These presses will run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This particular press can make 20,000 pills an hour. These presses, smaller, 5,000 pills an hour.

Just cranking them through. And here's the thing that I want you to know. The die cast, the mold for the pills, can be made to look like anything.

What are some things you can do to raise awareness with your friends? I think some things I can do to raise awareness is just really talk about the dangers that come with these substances and that you could die, and this is a real-life thing that a lot of people in our country are facing. Sherry from the DEA told us that partnerships are very important. How exactly do you work with the DEA? Well, she's right.

Partnerships are really the key to solving this. So we partner with the DEA in a couple of different ways. In one way, we partner on law enforcement interdiction efforts to take those drugs off the street and to disrupt and dismantle drug-trafficking organizations.

And then the second way is through prevention initiatives. We go out into the community, we do presentations together, we develop resources together, we share information with the coalitions. Coalitions are made of a wide variety of people, so you have business community, you have the faith community, you have government, you have schools, you have law enforcement, and we provide education and information for them.

They then take that out and use it in their community to educate others. And education is the key because knowledge is power because the more people know about a drug issue or a drug trend, the less likely they are to use. It's great to see all the work you're doing.

Does it take a long time to see results? Unfortunately, it does take some time. So really, I always tell people it takes about two years to change a trend. In that first year, what happens is when you get the education and information out into the community, they become more aware of the issue.

And then in the second year, that's where you get use change. So that's where you get less people using, less people overdosing, and less people dying. In 2020, we lost 14 young people under the age of 15 to fentanyl poisoning.

We got all of those coalition leaders together and we said, we've got to do something about this. And so the coalitions went out and they did town halls in all 30 of their communities. We found out that the public really had a big misunderstanding about fentanyl and fake pills and naloxone and the Good Samaritan Law.

So we created really the nation's first fentanyl toolkit. And so fast forward now, remember I said it takes two years to change a trend. In 2020, we had a kid under the age of 18 overdosing almost every single day in the state of Arizona.

If you can imagine that. And so today, I'm happy to report that that number's been cut in half. And so prevention does work, and that's clearly showing that all of those coalition efforts are truly paying off.

I think unless this issue has directly affected someone or someone close to them that they know, they just don't take it as serious as they should because it is like the genuine issue. Like one pill could really kill. What would you say to maybe some of the youth who thinks that, oh, this couldn't happen to me, or this isn't a big issue in my community? I would say it hasn't happened yet.

And so in prevention, what we try to do is we try to alert people before that happens. We don't want you to lose your best friend. We don't want you to lose a classmate.

And while it might not be here now, good. We want you to be ready because it's coming. Do you have any advice for young people like myself who want to get involved? Absolutely.

Make your voice heard. You all are the key to solving this problem. Get some of the champions in your school together and create a club or create a group working on this.

Maybe you do a podcast or maybe you do a blog or maybe you're on social media, you're an influencer. Well, work some of these messages about fake pills in there and educate your audiences about that. You may be saving a life just by putting that little tidbit of information in front of them.

You can join the cause by reaching out to organizations around you that have youth programs and figure out how to volunteer with them. Everyone is already a part of this cause. Things like this are happening to our friends and our neighbors and at our schools.

Here are three things that I think you should note about this cause in general. One being that you can't trust anything that's not prescribed to you by a doctor and produced in a pharmacy. Two would be that you should know how to help someone when they overdose and be able to use Narcan to help save a life.

And three is you should be on the lookout for signs of depression and stress because oftentimes those are what lead to instances regarding fake pills. Counterfeit drugs are a problem throughout the United States. Here in Arizona, we are a trans shipment state.

The Sinaloa cartel brings the drugs from Mexico into Arizona. They're repackaged and then distributed throughout the United States. Every community in America is impacted by the flow of counterfeit drugs.

Fentanyl can impact anyone. For example, we've got 15-year-old Catherine who had a tooth pulled. Her mom couldn't afford the prescription pain medication.

That afternoon, she put it out on social media that she needed something for the pain and Catherine is no longer with us. There's also Jack who got hurt at football practice. He couldn't get into the doctor right away while he was waiting.

Somebody gave him something for that pain and Jack is gone. Fentanyl's been known to be found in illicit drugs and of course the fake pills that we've been talking about. Many people think that by taking half a pill that they will be safe.

In reality, fentanyl is not seen. You cannot smell it and you cannot taste it. And you do not know where the fentanyl is.

The safest thing is to say no. That one's false. There's no safe way to take one of these fake pills.

Fentanyl is one of the most dangerous and deadly substances that we've ever seen. And you never know where that fentanyl is going to be in that pill. There could be enough fentanyl in that pill to kill one person or four people.

So truly, one pill can kill. We've learned some great ways organizations are working together on a national and regional level. Now, let's meet some people working on the ground making a difference.

What led you to join the fight against fake pills? What led me to join this fight was after losing my son in 2020, Jacob. He lost his life to illicit fentanyl and fake pills. He's forever 25.

I did not know what fentanyl was. I did not know this was a problem in our country until it hit home for us. My son had .0009 of fentanyl.

And if somebody would have given him Narcan or called 911, he would be here today. I've been a counselor for 14 years. And even being a high school counselor, I never knew what fentanyl was.

And it's very important that everyone start talking about this. So how do you get people to talk about this stuff? I tell my story any given opportunity I have. Another thing is I also go do presentations about what I have experienced and what my family has experienced.

I know that this is happening and a lot is going on and it's really easily accessible for my friends to get this type of stuff. But honestly, it's kind of scary to tell them, you know, to not get these pills. It is a scary conversation to have.

And it takes a lot of courage to open up that conversation. But if you know of your friends that are doing any of these things, it's important that you let them know about the dangers of what they're actually looking for. It's very hard when you know somebody's doing this and you know what it could lead to.

And if you stay quiet, it's going to even be more heartbreaking when something does happen to them. Because you're not only going to lose a friend, but their families are going to be shattered. Why do you think teens end up using pills? There's many reasons.

In today's world, it's hard to be a teenager. There are many kids who suffer from anxiety. They suffer from stress, life, their schoolwork, their home life, their peers.

Some of them even struggle with themselves, identity issues. Some of them just want to experiment just because they want to experiment. And that's why it's so important that you all come to a responsible person to help overcome anxiety, help overcome the stresses of life, help overcome whatever may be going on at home or with friends or even themselves.

Why do we have to worry about our mental health? Mental health needs to be put down as a priority. Because if you don't have your mental health, you can't function properly. You can't think straight.

Having an issue with anxiety, with a social phobia, with depression, all that keeps you from excelling and reaching your goals and being who you are. Mental health is very, very important. But it's also important that it's treated in the proper way.

I like to exercise a lot. I hang out with my friends all the time. Or if I can't, I'll try and read a book or draw or even play a bunch of video games.

Playing on my musical instruments like my piano and my drums. I also like to draw and petting my cat. Exercise and music are two of my biggest stress relievers.

It's always okay to ask for help. You can reach out to your parents, a school counselor, or another trusted adult if you're ever feeling overwhelmed. Remember that your mental health is just as important as your physical health.

Now it's time we meet back up with Noah and another special guest. Thank you for speaking with me today. Why don't you tell everyone who you are? My name is Amy Neville and I am representing the Alexander Neville Foundation.

Why don't you tell us about that? Sure. So the Alexander Neville Foundation came to be after we lost our 14-year-old son. Alexander's fentanyl poisoning in June of 2020.

It was a very confusing time for us. We were blindsided by death. We were very close with our kiddo and we had lots of conversations about drugs and what was out there.

And we very quickly came to realize that there is this whole piece of the puzzle that no one was talking about. And that was the fentanyl crisis that we were experiencing in our country. Definitely.

Well, I'm very sorry to hear about Alex. What is the overall goal you're hoping to achieve with this foundation? The overall goal with the foundation is to educate young people. To give you guys these pieces of information so you can make informed choices.

What is your opinion on how easy it is to access all these drugs and different substances? It blows my mind at how easy it is to get these substances. Social media is one of the largest opener drug markets we have in the United States. These apps have brought this into the light.

It's in your pocket 24-7. You know, it's always there with you. That's not just drugs.

That's your bullies. That's the sexual predators. All this harmful content is with you all the time.

And that's a lot to deal with. So in your organization, you work with a lot of teens and youth. Why do you think it's so important to get their perspective on the issue? Well, I really believe that you guys are going to be the ones that are going to really help our country out of this.

You guys are each other's greatest influence. You guys are in the trenches. You are in these social media spaces where it's happening.

And you have the biggest influence over each other, right? But at the end of the day, you guys are going to be the ones that keep each other safe. As a young person myself, is there any warning signs you know I can look out for within my peers? If you have a friend that's starting to break commitments with you, you can't get a hold of them. Maybe they're talking about how tired they are and they're sleeping at weird times of the day.

And maybe they're having big mood swings. Their behavior just seems really off. That would be some indicators.

I would be concerned that something's going on. So with that, what advice would you have for people like me? You know, the best advice I can give you is don't do it. I mean, I know that seems so simple and it's probably not what you want to hear.

But at the time that we are living in, that one time could be your last time. You could die. I meet parents every day who've lost somebody.

I get emails all the time from parents asking me, like, how do we wake up tomorrow? How do I go on without my kid? And there's no simple answer for that. So, you know, consider those around you. Kids are dying every day and we really need to work together as a community to put a stop to this.

Fentanyl is the number one killer for 18 to 45 year olds. In the last two years, we've seen a 1200% increase in the death rate among 14 and under. And then 12 to 17 year olds right now are the fastest growing demographic for death.

We want to arm you with the right knowledge to make healthy choices. If we can get the facts out there to your age group, to the adults in your life, we are going to create huge change in our communities across the country. Sometimes we can feel powerless, like there's nothing we can do.

But as we learned today, our generation will play a vital role in ending this epidemic. We can have an impact and our voices need to be heard. I'm advocating to raise awareness about fake pills because I know that I'm super lucky to have the ability to go to college next year and advance my future that other people don't.

I would say that I am advocating to raise awareness by talking to my friends. Don't be afraid to talk to someone. There are people in your life who you can trust and you can confide in, and don't be scared to go to them.

Know that you're enough without having these things be in your life, and that you don't want to take these risks and possibly end your life just to have a little bit of extra fun that people say. You need to be comfortable with saying no. You could just take one pill and you never know, it could have something that could potentially end it all for you.

Every day, we can determine what our futures will look like and how we impact the world around us. We have the power to spread awareness, support each other, and make a difference. Together, we can make more informed choices and create stronger communities.

Together, we can keep our futures bright. Shout out to everyone who made today's virtual field trip possible. Your authenticity and willingness to share your stories made this an unforgettable experience.