



Drug importation proponents have perpetuated many myths about the supposed safety and benefits of importation. Here are the facts.

MYTH

Importation is safe.

The United States government would make sure medicines are safe.

Drugs purchased from other countries are the same as those sold in the United States.

Foreign governments will ensure medicines exported to the United States are safe.

No one has been hurt by imported drugs.

Importation saves money.

FACT

There are numerous recorded instances of contaminated or counterfeit drugs that have harmed patients. **The FDA has said repeatedly that it cannot verify the quality or safety of medicines procured through importation.**

Currently, the Department of Health and Human Services has the authority to allow importation of some drugs from Canada if, among other requirements, the Secretary certifies to Congress that such imports would not threaten the health and safety of the American public and would generate cost savings for consumers. To date, no Secretary (democrat or republican) has been able to do that. **Even in 2020, despite claims to the contrary, the Secretary was no more able to certify than his predecessors and questionably circumvented the statute by punting the responsibility to state governments.**

Foreign drugs may not be the same and could put patients at risk. **Even if medicines look the same, they may be different in dosage or strength.** Medicines may have different labels – including in other languages – increasing the burden on patients and health care providers and pharmacists.

It is naive to think other governments will assume the responsibility of checking the safety and quality of medicines intended for people who are not their citizens. In fact, Canadian authorities have expressly stated **they are not responsible for the safety and quality of prescription drugs exported** from Canada to the United States.

Unfortunately, there have been numerous instances of harm caused to patients because of imported or online-purchased drugs. Patients in the United States, the UK and Canada (among others) have died through online purchases of contaminated fake medicines or the lack of a doctor or pharmacist supervising the use of medicines acquired online.

Most of any potential savings from commercial-scale importation proposals would be absorbed by middlemen. Individual consumers can often achieve greater savings through safer means, including:

- **Checking if generics are available**
- **Shopping around for different health plans**
- **Shopping around for different pharmacies**
- **Seeking out patient assistance programs**