



## The Logically Lethal Reason an Octogenarian Wants Me to Help Her Score Some Fentanyl

Ej Montini

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For months now, news coverage of the deadly drug fentanyl has involved either lies, misinformation or politics. Sometimes all three.

This one involves an 84-year-old woman who would like me to acquire a fatal dose ... for her.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 150 individuals die each day from overdoses related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

The most recent stories involving the drug dealt with the ignorant, fear-mongering claims about drug cartels potentially spiking Halloween candy with the drug.

It was repeated again and again by Republican politicians and by hosts on Fox News.

### **Dangerous inaccuracies spread about a deadly drug**

It was never going to happen.

Prior to Halloween the writer Joel Best, who has researched Halloween hoaxes like this going back to 1958, wrote an essay for PBS pointing out how, logically, it makes no sense for drug cartels to hand out an expensive drug to children who not only could be killed by it but who couldn't afford to purchase any.

Besides, he wrote, "I can't find any evidence that any child has ever been killed or seriously injured by a contaminated treat picked up in the course of trick-or-treating."

The second ludicrous fentanyl story involves the ongoing misinformation spouted by the Republican candidate for Arizona governor, Kari Lake, about how the drug enters the U.S.

Lake's xenophobic and inaccurate speeches and campaign commercials made it seem as if massive quantities of fentanyl are smuggled into the U.S. by illegal border crossers when she knows – or should – that isn't true.

Analysts from the Cato Institute found that 86.2% of convicted fentanyl traffickers are U.S. citizens. In addition, Cato analysts found that 90% of fentanyl seizures were made at legal crossing points or interior vehicle checkpoints.

**She wants fentanyl – for when the time comes**

In the course of debunking disinformation like this about fentanyl, news accounts often point out that individual users have died from a single fentanyl dose.

That is what prompted the woman in her 80s to contact me.

She wrote: “Yes, I read your article in the paper (about fentanyl and Kari Lake). Yes, I know that pill is all over the place, except I am not a teenager or involved in drugs.

“I want one real fentanyl pill which will be put in a box and locked in my safe, which cannot be removed.

“I am 84 years old and when the time comes that I can no longer function I want to go to sleep. My family agrees with me. The doctors do not.

“You see so much going on. Any suggestions where I can purchase one pill?”

### **I sympathize with her dilemma**

Apparently, as much as I see, it is not enough, because I did not see this woman coming.

We get so wrapped up in the present – our present – that even those of us who have dealt with unspeakable loss don’t think much about our futures, about that time, perhaps, when we can no longer function and we want to go to sleep.

I cannot advise the woman where she might purchase one pill.

I can tell her that the Drug Enforcement Agency says two milligrams of fentanyl can be lethal, depending on a person’s body size, tolerance and past usage.

I can tell her as well that law enforcement authorities have found pills (and powder and liquid) laced with fentanyl of varying degrees. The concern for casual users is that a single dose could be fatal. The concern for the woman who wrote to me is that a single dose may not be deadly enough.

I would advise her against asking for anyone else’s help.

At the same time, I sympathize with her dilemma.

### **Elections impact our lives ... and deaths**

I believe there are many people who are not suicidal, not mentally ill, but who believe they would reasonably recognize a time when they’d simply want to go to sleep. And whose families would agree.

Our government does not permit such a thing, however. Not yet.

Which tells us something else important about elections, something I hadn’t thought of until an 84-year-old woman asked me to help her score some fentanyl.

The decisions we make at the polls not only have an impact on our lives, but on our deaths.

