

# PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT



## HIGH LEVELS OF MEDETOMIDINE FOUND IN DARK WEB XANAX

**COUNTIES:** PHILADELPHIA / NATIONWIDE

**NATURE OF EVENT:** HIGH LEVELS OF MEDETOMIDINE IN DARK WEB XANAX

**DATES:** 6/9/2026 - ?

**ADVERSE EVENTS:** YES, PROFOUND SEDATION

### OVERVIEW

A counterfeit XANAX (pictured right) being sold on the Dark Web as 4mg of bromazolam became the first benzodiazepine in our dataset, and to our knowledge, the first documented instance of the powerful veterinary sedative medetomidine to find its way into the pressed benzo supply. A common adulterant in fentanyl exhibits, medetomidine (tranq, mede) is present in roughly 80 percent of dope samples in Philadelphia. This marks only the second time medetomidine has been detected by P.A.G. outside the dope supply. Last November, PA Groundhogs tested a pill being sold in Philadelphia as oxycodone that contained only xylazine, medetomidine, cocaine and methamphetamine. No opioid was detected in that pill.



### DETAILS

On June 9 a whole pill sample was received by P.A.G. at CFSRE for analysis. The submitter identified the pill as being sold as 4mg of bromazolam by a trusted source on the Dark Web.

The pill was a white bar marked with the imprint XANAX on one side and the number “2” on the underside. In their notes the anonymous individual reported that they experienced deep sedation and that the pill was stronger than expected. GC/MS analysis determined that the counterfeit XANAX contained 1 part of bromazolam and 3.3 parts of medetomidine. In layman's terms that means there was **more than three times the amount of medetomidine in the pill as there was benzodiazepine.**

At this point, P.A.G. analysts do not believe this was intentional adulteration, which is an uncommon practice on the Dark Web given its many checks and balances and the enormous business risks associated with noncompliance (complete banishment from the marketplace, for instance). Bromazolam is structurally and pharmacologically similar to alprazolam. While it's true that the DEA placed it under Schedule I in March making it likely harder to import, there are numerous other benzo analogs and research chemicals readily available; and medetomidine, particularly in that concentration, would be unpleasant and likely lead to a mass exodus of customers. An intentional contamination simply makes no reasonable business sense. We suspect it could have involved a mislabeled powder delivered to a domestic pressing operation from China—where many research chemicals originate. We have seen this in the past but never at this scale.

### **WHY THIS MATTERS**

Medetomidine has a rapid onset dependency. Both medetomidine and benzodiazepines have extremely dangerous withdrawal profiles, and can be fatal if not properly managed. From a clinical perspective, while not identical, they could look similar leading to the use of improper protocols and clinical confusion when those protocols don't work. In the worst case death could result from untreated withdrawal from either drug. Because this pill was sold on the Dark Web it could conceivably turn up anywhere in the U.S.



#### **WARNING USE EXTREME CAUTION**

ANYONE PURCHASING XANAX BARS EVEN IF THEY ARE DESCRIBED AS PHARMACEUTICAL SHOULD USE A MEDETOMIDINE STRIP AND A BENZO STRIP TO TEST THEIR PILL.

**VISIT [PAGROUNDHOGS.ORG](http://PAGROUNDHOGS.ORG) TO ORDER P.A.G. TEST KITS  
TIPS? EMAIL [TIPS@PAGROUNDHOGS.ORG](mailto:TIPS@PAGROUNDHOGS.ORG)**