

Katherine Eban, *Dangerous Doses: How Counterfeiters Are Contaminating America's Drug Supply* (NY: Harcourt, 2005).

(you can read an overview excerpt at her website:
http://katherineeban.com/_article.php?id=60)

This book has a disturbing message: Counterfeit drugs are big business, and our system for detecting and getting them out of circulation is not up to the task. She informs us that no one knows how much of the nation's drug supply is counterfeit, and quotes an FDA estimate of 1%. But remember 1% is a big number, representing, five years ago, 35 million prescriptions. And the real number may be higher.

The book is organized around the story of one case, centered in Florida, that took years to bring to a somewhat successful conclusion. That makes the story unusual. One shadow actor in the entire episode is the Bush administration, which disliked regulation so much that when faced by the real problem of counterfeit drugs merely encouraged industry to talk about how to make the honor system work better here. I did not find the victory story as cause for much celebration. The book is very valuable for its description of the complexities of the drug distribution system, of the opportunities for corruption, and the resources needed to fight this crime.

The story makes her list of "what you can do" more compelling reading. It is a more detailed version of the FDA advice on the topic, available here:
<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/ucm079278.htm>.