

Spotify caught hosting hundreds of fake podcasts that advertise selling drugs

This week, Spotify rushed to remove hundreds of obviously fake podcasts found to be marketing prescription drugs in violation of Spotify's policies and, likely, federal law.

On Thursday, Business Insider (BI) reported that Spotify removed 200 podcasts advertising the sale of opioids and other drugs, but that wasn't the end of the scandal. Today, CNN revealed that it easily uncovered dozens more fake podcasts peddling drugs.

Some of the podcasts may have raised a red flag for a human moderator—with titles like “My Adderall Store” or “Xtrapharma.com” and episodes titled “Order Codeine Online Safe Pharmacy Louisiana” or “Order Xanax 2 mg Online Big Deal On Christmas Season,” CNN reported.

But Spotify's auto-detection did not flag the fake podcasts for removal. Some of them remained up for months, CNN reported, which could create trouble for the music streamer at a time when the US government is cracking down on illegal drug sales online.

“Multiple teens have died of overdoses from pills bought online,” CNN noted, sparking backlash against tech companies. And Donald Trump's aggressive tariffs were specifically raised to stop deadly drugs from bombarding the US, which the president declared a national emergency.

BI found that many podcast episodes featured a computerized

voice and were under a minute long, while CNN noted some episodes were as short as 10 seconds. Some of them didn't contain any audio at all, BI reported.

<https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/05/spotify-plays-whack-a-mole-with-fake-podcasts-selling-drugs-scamming-users/>