

## **New Law Regulates Internet Drug Sales**

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Oct. 17--A new law that regulates online pharmacies promises to give federal regulators, Internet companies and the medical profession a new weapon to stop the illicit flow of addictive drugs.

President Bush has signed into law the Ryan Haight Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act, which is designed to improve the safety of Internet pharmaceutical sales. The law, which Congress passed in late September, is named after a California teenager who died in 2001 from an overdose of prescription drugs.

The law requires a face-to-face meeting between patients and doctors in order for prescriptions to be valid. It also requires that prescriptions be written for "legitimate medical purpose" and increases penalties for the illegal sales of controlled substances over the Internet.

Before the law was enacted, the legal definition of what constitutes a prescription had been left to state pharmacy boards.

"This gives us some help from the feds by giving the feds a little more ability to go after not only the doctors and the pharmacists that are participating but to go after the principals," said William Winsley, executive director of the Ohio State Board of Pharmacy. "In the past, that's been difficult to do."

The abuse of addictive drugs such as Vicodin and OxyContin has become a nationwide epidemic, ensnaring not only patients, but also doctors, pharmacists, drug distributors and others involved in the Internet drug trade.

Christine Jones, general counsel for the Web hosting company Go Daddy, said the law will provide almost immediate results to stymie rogue Internet pharmacies. She said that in the first half of 2008, her company suspended more than 6,000 registered domain names that it suspected of being rogue pharmacies.

The new law requires any company selling pharmaceuticals online to procure a specific endorsement from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

In the past few years the federal government began to crack down on the illegal sales of drugs along the entire pharmaceutical supply chain. Last year, it suspended the controlled substance registration of three of Cardinal Health's warehouses, claiming the Dublin drug distributor failed to notify the Drug Enforcement Administration of suspicious orders. Cardinal Health recently settled with the DEA, agreeing to pay \$34 million in civil penalties as the suspensions were lifted.

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