

"Justin's Bill" signed into law making it harder to get addictive drugs online

St. Paul - Governor Pawlenty took a break from budget negotiations Thursday to sign "Justin's Bill" into law.

The bill is named after Justin Pearson, a 24-year-old Saint Cloud man who died from an accidental drug overdose on Christmas day, 2006.

He became addicted to Vicodin after injuring his back during a four-wheeling accident, according to his father Dan Pearson.

When Justin's doctors saw that he was addicted to the prescription pain medication, they cut it off, which prompted him to find it elsewhere.

A junk e-mail advertising Vicodin without a prescription eventually led Justin down a road of drug abuse.

At the height of his use he took as many as 80 Vicodin pills within a 24-hour period, all said to have been purchased over the Internet.

This new law will tighten up the definition of what constitutes a legal prescription in Minnesota and crack down on the pharmacies that cooperate with illegal online pharmacies.

Lawmakers said this legislation was needed because online pharmacies began shifting their methods based on the changing regulatory environment.

For example, after Minnesota passed a law clarifying a prescription isn't valid if based solely on answering a questionnaire, some sites began adding a telephone call in order to adhere to the law and claim a legitimate patient-prescriber relationship.

But because of the passage of "Justin's Bill", now a prescription won't be valid unless documented proof of a face-to-face, patient-physician evaluation is provided.

Dan Pearson called Thursday "bittersweet" for his family.

He said while nothing can bring Justin back, he sees this as an opportunity to save many others like his son.

"Having this bill in his name really is not only about my son Justin, but the other Justins that have passed away," said Pearson.

"Now all we worry about is the Justins in the future."

Dan Pearson said his son would have turned 26 on Monday.

The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy link provided has a list of 15 Internet pharmacy providers accredited by the organization.



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