

Heroin use up because of crackdown on prescription drugs

By Jerry Markon and Alice Crites, Washington Post

From the beginning, the U.S. government's decade-long crackdown on prescription drug abuse has run an unsettling risk: that arresting doctors and shuttering "pill mills" would inadvertently fuel a new epidemic of heroin use.

State and federal officials have pressed their campaign against prescription drug abuse with urgency, trying to contain a scourge that kills more than 16,000 people each year. The crackdown has helped reduce the illegal use of some medications and raised awareness of their dangers.

But at the same time that some pain medications have become less available on the street and pricier, many users have switched to cheaper heroin, since prescription pills and heroin are in the same class of drugs and provide a comparable, euphoric high.

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