

Prescription drug abusers turn to heroin

By Lisa Girion, Los Angeles Times

Standing in the pulpit above Austin Klimusko's casket three years ago, his mother used his death to draw the connection between pills from a pharmacy and drugs from the street.

"When his prescriptions dried up, he turned to heroin," Susan Klimusko said in a frank eulogy meant as a warning to the young mourners at Simi Valley's Cornerstone Church.

Last week, the nation's top public health official used the bully pulpit to sound the same alarm. The prescription drug epidemic is stoking the nation's appetite for heroin with disastrous results, Dr. Tom Frieden, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters in a teleconference.

"We are priming people to addiction to heroin with overuse of prescription opiates, which are, after all, essentially the same chemical with the same impact on the brain," he said.

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