

WHY DO THEY DO IT?

RYAN THOMAS HAIGHT



Ryan Thomas Haight attended Grossmont High School in La Mesa, California. He was outgoing and successful academically, and he enjoyed various athletic activities, such as skiboarding and swimming. Ryan also enjoyed using the computer.¹⁰³ On February 12, 2001, Francine Haight came home in the afternoon and noticed that her son's car had not moved. She knew then that something was wrong. She found Ryan dead in his bed. Later, one of the sheriff's deputies came out and said, "This is what we found in your son's room." It was a large bottle of Vicodin. Ryan had overdosed.

What made this situation even worse was that he had been able to purchase the Vicodin over the Internet with a debit card. This drug is strictly regulated by the DEA.¹⁰⁴ A physician on the Internet, whom he had never met, prescribed the drug to Ryan, and an Internet pharmacy mailed the Vicodin to his home. Ryan was only 17 years old when he purchased the drug; he was 18 when he died.¹⁰⁵ Due to the growing concern over distribution of controlled substances via the Internet, the Ryan Haight Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act of 2008 went into effect in April 2009.¹⁰⁶ Some of the requirements include the following:

- Face-to-face requirement for prescribing. With few exceptions, a doctor must conduct at least one in-person medical evaluation of the patient.
- Endorsement requirement. The DEA must provide an endorsement before a pharmacy can dispense controlled substances via the Internet.
- Enhanced penalties for Schedule III through V. Penalties will be enhanced for unlawfully dispensing controlled substances in Schedules III through V.
- Prohibition on advertising illegal sales.
- Requirement that Internet pharmacies post certain information on their websites.

DEA acting administrator Michele M. Leonhart stated, "Cyber-criminals illegally peddling controlled substances over the Internet have invaded households and threatened America's youth for far too long. . . . This landmark piece of legislation will bring rogue pharmacy operators out of the shadows."¹⁰⁷

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Do you think the Ryan Haight Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act will prevent these types of incidents?
2. Can you think of any other policies or laws that should be in place to address these cybercriminals who sell controlled substances over the Internet?