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Corey Haim obtained 553 pills before he died

California Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown calls him the 'poster child' for prescription drug addiction. He says the actor went to seven doctors and as many different pharmacies.

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By Richard Winton

In the weeks before his death from a suspected accidental overdose, actor Corey Haim went "doctor shopping" and obtained at least 553 pills of powerful prescription medications from seven doctors and as many different pharmacies, California's attorney general said Tuesday.

Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown said Haim visited physicians at offices, urgent-care facilities and emergency rooms to obtain the potential deadly collection of pills and on one occasion used an alias.

He said Haim's case illustrates how prescription drugs can be just as dangerous as street drugs, and that doctor-shopping can be deadly.

"He is the poster child for the problem," Brown told reporters Tuesday. "There are a lot of doctor-shoppers and most of them aren't celebrities."

Investigators released a report confirming that from Feb. 2 to March 5 -- five days before he died -- the star of such movies as "The Lost Boys" and "License to Drive" obtained more than 195 tablets of Valium, 194 tablets of Soma, 149 tablets of Vicodin and 15 tablets of Xanax.

Haim, 38, was found unresponsive last month at his mother's apartment. He later died at a hospital.

Los Angeles Police Department officials said his death appeared to be an accidental overdose. He had complained of flu-like symptoms before he died. Los Angeles County coroner's officials have deferred a cause of death pending further tests.

According to state Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement investigators, Haim's primary physician acknowledged that the actor was addicted to pain medication. Brown said the actor obtained pain medication for myriad injuries and prescriptions for depression.

The doctors responsible for prescribing the pills told state agents that Haim told them he had shoulder pain resulting from an incident while he was filming a movie in Canada.

Haim also claimed that he was not seeing any other doctors, and many of the physicians complained that they felt "duped" by him.

On his visits to multiple pharmacies to fill the prescriptions, investigators found the actor either requested additional medication or asked for refills before the due date.

On Tuesday, Brown appealed to doctors to check with the state's prescription-monitoring database, known as CURES, before prescribing such medications. The database is available to doctors and pharmacies, Brown said. Its use is voluntary.

Witnesses told state investigators that Haim had abused prescription drugs since he was 15, attempting rehabilitation several times.

Haim's name already has surfaced in connection with an illegal prescription drug ring operating in Southern California, Brown said. In that case, the prescription in Haim's name was for OxyContin. One arrest has already been made in that investigation.

That probe is linked to as many as 5,000 illegal prescriptions. It began before the actor's death, and the suspect arrested may not have provided the drugs involved in Haim's death. The ring operates by ordering prescription drug pads from authorized vendors and using identities stolen from doctors.