

Documentary screening stresses opioid addiction dangers

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FBI director discusses issue at Georgetown University event

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On Sept. 21, Georgetown University students, alumni, and faculty gathered in the campus' historic Gaston Hall in Washington, D.C., for a special screening of the documentary *Chasing the Dragon: The Life of an Opiate Addict*.

Released by the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration earlier this year, the film focuses on educating young adults about the dangers of opioid addiction. The 45-minute documentary — the title of which refers to the never-ending pursuit of the original or ultimate high — features stark first-person accounts by individuals who have abused opioids, or whose children have abused opioids, with tragic consequences.

While the FBI and the DEA have had success working with law enforcement across the country to target drug suppliers and dealers, demand has continued to grow. In response, the two agencies created *Chasing the Dragon* to bring awareness to the growing epidemic of prescription opiate and heroin use.

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Following the film screening, FBI Director James Comey spoke to audience members about the severe impact opioid addiction has had in America. He shared the efforts undertaken by the FBI and DEA to disrupt distributors, gangs, cartels, and corrupt doctors who are driving the issue, but stressed the challenges the two agencies face in stemming drug demand.

“We recognize you can’t arrest your way out of any kind of problem,” Comey said on Sept. 21. “So we want to become part of the solution by raising awareness and hoping to steer good people away from something that will swallow their lives.”

Acting DEA Administrator Chuck Rosenberg also joined Comey on Sept. 21 and shared sobering statistics about opioid addiction in the country. He said that the United States would lose 47,000 people in 2016 to a drug overdose.

“We know that the path from abusing pills to using heroin is not just correlative, but causative,” Rosenberg said. “We have about 589 new heroin users every single day in the United States. Four out of five started on pills.”

Comey and Rosenberg’s remarks were followed by additional panel discussions, which included a Georgetown opioid researcher and a mother who lost her son to a heroin overdose at age 19.

Gina Woodward’s story about Tyler was similar to the first-person accounts in the film. It was the reason why she wanted to share it at the screening.

“I want to be his voice, and I know because of his heart that he would want me to help other people,” Woodward said.

The Georgetown University event was held in conjunction with Prescription Opioid and Heroin Epidemic Awareness Week, which was proclaimed by President Obama on Friday, September 16, 2016. Part of the proclamation included efforts being made by the federal government and law enforcement to help get more people into treatment instead of jail.

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