

Doctor ordered to trial in 3 drug deaths

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LOS ANGELES • A doctor accused of prescribing painkillers to three men who died – including a Lake Forest man – was ordered Tuesday to stand trial for second-degree murder in the overdose deaths.

The decision by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge M.L. Villar de Longoria to send Dr. Hsui-Ying “Lisa” Tseng to trial came after a three-week preliminary hearing. Young men told of going to Tseng after using up prescriptions from other physicians. A few testified under grants of immunity. There was testimony that about 12 of Tseng’s patients died of

drug overdoses. Authorities allege that Tseng, an osteopath who operated a storefront clinic with her husband in Rowland Heights, wrote more than 27,000 prescriptions over a three-year period. The judge called the amounts “astounding.”

She was charged with prescribing Xanax, oxycodone, methadone, Soma, and other drugs.

Tseng has pleaded not guilty to 24 felony counts and could face 45 years to life in prison if convicted on all charges. The judge denied a defense request to have Tseng’s bail lowered from \$3 million to \$1 million.

The judge said the results of Tseng’s prescription writing should have

In Orange County

Dr. Hsui-Ying “Lisa” Tseng became known among drug users in South County for her willingness to prescribe narcotics knowing they would be used for recreational purposes, lawsuits allege. Separate wrongful-death suits were filed last year by the families of Ryan Winter and Riley Russo, both 20. Winter of Aliso Viejo and Russo of Laguna Niguel died from overdoses of drugs obtained with prescriptions from Tseng, according to the suits.

Attorney Larry Eisenberg filed these cases and has represented 8 families against Dr. Tseng.

been reasonably foreseeable to her when her patients started dying in alarming numbers.

Los Angeles County Deputy District Attorney John Niedermann told the judge at the start of the hearing that Tseng knew that three other patients had died after receiving drugs from her in 2007 and 2008. “It

put her on notice that the prescriptions she was providing were leading to deaths,” he said.

No charges were filed in those earlier drug overdoses, but the prosecution sought to use them and other deaths as evidence against Tseng.

The preliminary hearing was more extensive than

most, with more than 40 witnesses testifying. They included members of law enforcement, the coroner’s office, former staff members at Tseng’s clinic, expert witnesses, former patients and family members of patients.

Tseng was represented by five attorneys. Four of them presented final arguments, blaming the dead patients for making a willful choice not to follow Tseng’s instructions on how to take the drugs. Some patients added alcohol to the mix, they said.

They said she treated her patients in good faith and wanted to relieve their pain.

In court for every day of the hearing was April Rov-

ero, whose son Joey died after receiving prescriptions from Tseng. The 21-year-old University of Arizona student drove to California with friends to get the prescriptions in 2009.

The deaths of Vu Nguyen, 29, of Lake Forest, and Steven Ogle, 25, of Palm Desert, also were charged in the case.

April Rovero founded the National Coalition Against Prescription Drug Abuse.

In recent days a delegation of mothers appeared in court wearing protest T-shirts and buttons with pictures of the dead young men.

Tseng’s next court appearance is scheduled for July 10.