

By **JAIME HOLGUIN** / CBS / December 16, 2003, 10:50 AM

# RU-486 Eyed In Abortion Debate

Share / Tweet / Reddit / Flipboard / Email



FD promo strip afghanistan the road ahead DAY 2 / CBS

Holly Patterson's father Monty was still in shock when he buried his 18-year-old daughter just days after he was called to a northern California emergency room.

"The doctor came in and basically explained to me that this was complication of the pill," he says. "And I thought, well what kind of pill? The birth control pill?"

It turns out, as **CBS News Correspondent Sandra Hughes** reports, it was RU-486, commonly called the abortion pill.

Holly Patterson never told her father or stepmother she'd taken RU-486. The coroner says her death was caused by infection after a "drug-induced abortion."

The case has inflamed both sides in the abortion debate and turned Holly Patterson's parents into crusaders against RU-486.

"What we're concerned about is the health and welfare of young women and teenagers, our daughters," says Monty Patterson.

RU-486 is the first pill in a two-step procedure to terminate a pregnancy under two months. It causes abortion and a day or so later, a second, different pill causes contractions that are supposed to complete the process.

## CBSN LIVE

WATCH



### Watch CBS News Live

Watch CBS News anytime, anywhere with our 24/7 digital news network. Stream CBSN live or on demand for FREE on your TV, computer, tablet, or smartphone.

Watch Now

## WATCH CBSN LIVE



CBS Morning News: today's top stories



Study finds pregnant women with high blood pressure more likely to suffer from heart attack or other deadly conditions



Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders declares victory in Iowa caucus debacle

Coronavirus outbreak now has

Holly Patterson took RU-486 at a Planned Parenthood clinic and received the second pill to take at home. Days later, she went to the emergency room with bleeding and cramping and was given painkillers. She died a few days after that. California health officials and the FDA are investigating.

Abortion opponents say this proves the drug regimen is dangerous, pointing out the FDA said the second pill should also be taken under supervision at a clinic.

"The second drug in the RU-486 regimen actually causes the woman's cervix to open, (and) at that point bacteria can enter in," says Wendy Wright, of the group Concerned Women for America. "That can cause a serious infection."

But researchers who've studied both drugs say they've been used safely by 200,000 women in the U.S., and Planned Parenthood doesn't follow FDA recommendations because so much more clinical evidence has now been collected.

"These evidence-based studies really show that these alternative approaches are safe and effective," says Dr. Paul Blumenthal, of Johns Hopkins University.

Now anti-abortion legislators have introduced what they call "Holly's Law" to suspend FDA approval pending investigation.

"(It) kills babies, and sometimes it kills their mother," says Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md.

"There are anti-choice extremists in Washington, politicians whose goal is to make all abortion illegal," says Gloria Feldt, the president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Holly Patterson's father and stepmother say this isn't about abortion rights pro or con, but about drugs they consider deadly.

"We'll never see her grow up to be a beautiful woman and see her children," says her stepmother Helen.

"We lost our future," says Monty Patterson.

© 2003 CBS. All rights reserved.

Share / Tweet / Reddit / Flipboard / Email



12 confirmed cases in the U.S.



Tons of coal ash being transferred to mainland U.S. from Puerto Rico

## FOLLOW US



Latest tweets from Norah O'Donnell

## POPULAR ON CBS NEWS

- 01 / Cruise ship passengers screened for coronavirus in New Jersey
- 02 / DA says murder suspect "put on a show" at trial
- 03 / Joe Walsh ends bid for 2020 GOP presidential nomination
- 04 / ICE agent shoots man in face while serving warrant on another man
- 05 / "Mobotuaries": Anna May Wong - Death of a trailblazer



## THE UPLIFT — STORIES THAT INSPIRE



Kobe Bryant remembered as "Superman" by Make-a-Wish fan

Mayor Max the golden retriever proves he has a nose



for politics



Volunteer visits 90-year-old woman and friendship grows



Chiefs player pays off adoption fees for shelter dogs



Businessman surprises Toledo students with free college tuition



Teen who was told to cut dreads surprised with scholarship

## CBS NEWS ON SAMSUNG TV

**CBS NEWS**  
ON YOUR  
**SAMSUNG SMART TV**  
Free, live, 24/7.

### CBSNews.com

- Site Map
- Help
- Contact Us
- CBS Bios
- Careers
- CBSi Careers
- Internships
- Development Programs
- CBS News Store

### CBS Interactive

- Privacy Policy
- CA Privacy/Info We Collect
- CA Do Not Sell My Info
- Ad Choice
- Terms of Use
- Mobile User Agreement
- About CBS
- Advertise
- Closed Captioning

### Follow Us

- Facebook
- Twitter
- RSS
- Email Newsletters
- YouTube
- CBS News Radio
- CBS Local



Copyright © 2020 CBS Interactive Inc.  
All rights reserved.

