



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 5, 2010

“Ella” Abortion Drug Now on Sale in U.S.

A controversial “birth control” drug, approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) despite evidence that it induces abortion in women who take it, is now on sale in the U.S. On December 1 Watson Pharmaceuticals, the New Jersey-based distributor of the drug known as “Ella,” announced that it is now available by prescription at pharmacies and clinics across the nation, as well as through some online pharmacies.



Approved by the FDA in August following a week of testimony from both pro-life and pro-abortion forces, the drug is designed to prevent pregnancy when taken up to five days after a woman has sexual intercourse by restricting ovulation, said Watson.

In announcing the drug’s launch in the United States, Fred Wilkinson, executive vice president of Watson, declared that “Ella is the first truly new emergency contraceptive option for U.S. women since 1999.” He promised that his company was committed to making the drug “available to women as soon as possible and supporting [its availability] in ways that emphasize education and access.”

But opponents of the drug say that far from being a contraceptive that prevents pregnancy, Ella is actually designed to terminate an already viable pregnancy by eliminating an embryo that has been implanted in a woman’s womb.

According to the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG), a group of pro-life physicians, Ella works like the notorious abortion pill RU-486 by destroying the placenta which gives life to the pre-born baby and ending its life. The group also said Ella can work like Plan B and Next Choice, two “morning after” pills that block an embryo from implanting in the uterus, leading to an abortion.

In a letter to the FDA before it approved the drug, AAPLOG, which represents over 2,000 pro-life physicians across the nation, said that from its study of the available material, ulipristal acetate, the active ingredient in Ella “is an abortifacient of the same type as mifepristone (RU 486)” and its approval as an emergency contraceptive raises serious health and ethical issues.” The letter added that “ulipristal’s potential effects on women who used the drug off-label and upon ongoing pregnancies are essentially unexamined and untested.”

Wendy Wright of Concerned Women for America pointed out Watson’s irresponsibility and warned of the devastating impact Ella’s easy availability could have on pregnant women and the children they are carrying. “Providing the drug through a website means that anyone can buy it any number of times,” she said. “Watson Pharmaceuticals has made it easy for girls of all ages, or a predatory man who is sexually abusing a girl or who wants to force an abortion on an unwilling woman, to obtain this drug.”



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During the run-up to Ella's approval, opponents of the drug charged that its manufacturer, as well as the FDA, conveniently ignored or downplayed the potentially serious side-effects and health risks inherent in the drug's use, including possible fatigue, dizziness, nausea, headaches, increased danger of infection, and bleeding in women who take Ella. "Women deserve to know that this drug can take a life that has already been implanted as well as the serious health risks it imposes, including infection and bleeding," said Jeanne Monahan, director of the Center for Human Dignity at the Family Research Council. "Women's health should not be jeopardized just to advance the agenda of the abortion industry."

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said before the drug's approval that mislabeling Ella as an "emergency contraceptive" is a dishonest move meant to deceive women who would never consider abortion as an option. "Millions of American women, even those willing to use a contraceptive to prevent fertilization in various circumstances, would personally never choose to have an abortion," the cardinal wrote in a letter to Dr. Margaret Hamburg, commissioner of the FDA. "They would be ill served by a misleading campaign to present Ulipristal simply as a 'contraceptive.'"

Jeanne Monahan of the pro-life Family Research Council (FRC) notes that Watson's Ella website parrots all of the inaccuracies about the drug, using slick marketing techniques to make certain that uninformed women visiting the site will get "inaccurate and/or incomplete information about Ella and the way it will work on their bodies and their babies."

For example, notes Monahan, Watson's website declares that the "Ella 30-mg tablet is not an abortion pill, and is not for use to end an existing pregnancy," but fails to point out that, in Monahan's words, "Ella is chemically and functionally identical to Mifepristone, commonly known as RU-486"— the "abortion pill."

Monahan said that in light of the fact that Ella is like RU-486 in chemical make-up and function, it becomes apparent that "Watson is more concerned with making money than providing complete and medically accurate information to women. In fact, their website admits just that. If you read through the small print, there is a disclaimer that reads, "The information provided is merely for educational purposes and its accuracy is not guaranteed. Watson assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions in the information on this Web site."

Monahan said that the Family Research Council has joined with other pro-life and pro-family organizations to launch ellacausesabortion.com as a vehicle to educate women and pharmacists about the serious health concerns related to the use of the drug. "Thousands of concerned Americans have contacted their pharmacists to ask that they not carry this new abortion drug," she said. "Watson Pharmaceuticals' misleading advertisements may boost Ella's drug sales, but they cannot hide the truth about Ella."



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