**At-home abortions harm U.K. women**

A mother in the United Kingdom illegally used abortion pills to kill her unborn child at 28 weeks of pregnancy. That’s four weeks past the legal cut off and 18 weeks beyond the recommended gestational limit for drug-induced abortions. The woman, whom news reports did not identify, used the country’s new “pills by post” program of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service.

It launched in April after the U.K. removed safety restrictions on abortion pills so women could access them more easily during the coronavirus pandemic. The pregnancy service is now investigating that and eight other cases in which women used the pill past the recommended 10-week limit, *The Sun* reported.

Before the changes, the law required women to go to an abortion facility and take the first of the two pills in the regimen under the supervision of a medical professional. Now, providers ship both pills to women’s homes after a 40- minute phone or video consultation.

U.K. pro-life advocates warned the loosened restrictions put women’s physical and mental health in danger. Stories like the one from *The Sun* confirmed those fears.

“That proved very quickly that we were right, that you can’t control whose taking them and at what gestation without the proper consultation,” said Alithea Williams, the campaigns and parliamentary assistant for the U.K. Society for the Protection of the Unborn. “Clearly they weren’t managing to get the right information over the phone.”

In a webinar for pro-life advocates earlier this month, Williams discussed some of the other potential dangers of women accessing abortion pills by mail. With domestic abuse on the rise, limited involvement from doctors makes it easier for partners to push abortion on women. “Do we really want to support an amendment that would remove the only opportunity many women have to speak confidentially and one-to-one with a doctor?” she asked.

At-home abortion can leave women traumatized. Courtney Barnes, a 27-year old stay-at-home mother from Kent, England, said she and her boyfriend decided she should get the abortion pills after she became pregnant during the pandemic. They have three daughters, ages 5, 3, and 1, and felt they could not afford a fourth child, Barnes told *The Daily Mail*. She took the pills at home in May. “I ended up lying in the bath trying to keep the pains at bay, and I didn’t get much sleep that night,” she told the newspaper. “It was a lot worse than I’d expected. The pain, the physical process was horrible.” *The Daily Mail* reported in late May that Barnes remained pregnant after the attempted drug-induced abortion. She said she planned to get a surgical abortion if the pregnancy continued.

Life Charity, a pro-life organization that offers supplies and housing to pregnant and new mothers, also provides counselling to post-abortive women over the phone. Liz Parsons, a member of Life Charity’s staff, said women call them to discuss the trauma from drug induced abortions.

“A lot of people… just see it as you take a pill and it just disappears, and that’s not the case,” she said. “That’s the reason a number of people do come to us, because they might have seen things they wish they hadn’t, like a dead baby in the toilet,” she said.

Although the British Pregnancy Advisory Service claims abortion by pill is safe, the website still lists as possible complications a 2 percent chance of retaining some foetal tissue, a 2 in 1,000 chance of infection or haemorrhaging, and a 1 in 100,000 chance of death for the mother. Those risks are on top of the drugs’ common side effects, which include vomiting and diarrhoea.

“I think a lot of the consequences of this are going to come out afterwards when everything has calmed down a bit,” Williams said.

Any record of complications from abortion pills during the pandemic will not be available until a year from now, and the statistics will only reflect the complications abortion facilities know about, which won’t be all of them.

For now, the British government claims it only loosened the abortion pill restrictions temporarily. But Williams is sceptical: “We highly doubt that they would let go of that power now that they’ve got it.”

*From Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation:*

The living but unborn are persons in the sight of God from the time of conception. Since abortion takes a human life, it is not a moral option except to prevent the death of another person, the mother.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart.

Palm 139:16 Your eyes saw my unformed body. All of the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.