



NEW PUBLICATION DEBUNKS MYTHS ABOUT RU486

Embargoed until Wednesday 8 February 2005

- The conscience vote slated for 9 February 2006 is not about abortion or the safety of RU486. It is about who should decide if the drug is safe for Australian men and women to use: a single politician for whatever reasons he likes, or the Therapeutic Goods Administration on the basis of the evidence.
- It is illogical to claim that RU486 is too risky for the regulator to assess its safety. If the facts are really on their side, ban-supporters should be seeking an evidence-based evaluation by the TGA.
- Australian women are capable of giving or withholding their informed consent to proposed medical procedures. If women are given correct information they have the capacity to decide if medical abortion is a suitable alternative for them.
- There is a substantial body of literature establishing the safety and efficacy of RU486. The World Health Organisation, The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and the AMA all endorse its supervised use.
- RU486 is not just an “abortion pill”. Its anti-progesterone action can treat Australians suffering from endometriosis, fibroids, Cushings syndrome, cancer and brain tumours.
- Evidence shows that RU486 does not increase the abortion rate, but dramatically lifts the number of abortions taking place earlier in pregnancy. One reason women choose medical abortion is because it allows them to terminate earlier than with surgery; usually in the privacy of their own home.
- Medical termination is done up to 7-9 weeks pregnancy from a women’s last menstrual period. Embryos at this stage are extremely small. For example at 5 weeks pregnancy, the embryo is 2-3.5mm long: about half the size of a grain of rice.
- Women’s experience of medical abortion is similar to their experience of a spontaneous
- miscarriage. Women’s sanitary requirements at this time, whether miscarrying spontaneously or as a result of medical abortion, are no different to those during a heavy monthly bleed.

- While tragic, the deaths of 4 American women from an infection they developed after taking RU486 do not significantly alter the very low mortality risk associated with medical and surgical abortion (around 1:100,000). This is lower than the death rate associated with Viagra and carrying a pregnancy to term. The difference between the risks women face of dying if they choose medical over surgical abortion are negligible.
- “Research” from independent institutions such as those connected with religious organizations or drug companies comes without quality guarantees. Policy-makers
- and journalists who rely on researchers/opinion-givers who do not fully or honestly disclose their credentials, their research methods and their sources of funding are at significant risk of exposure.