

# Waterbury Republican-American

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## Attorney in search of druggist errors

By Kimberley Thomsen  
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WATERBURY — A missfilled prescription for a 3-year-old came from the same pharmacy that gave a Southington woman a fatal dose of what she thought was diarrhea medicine.

Attorney Michael D'Amico said a Glastonbury woman, whom he did not identify, told him she discovered an error with a prescription that had been filled for her son. D'Amico is asking anyone who has had similar problems to call.

"My concern is that, even without doing any extensive investigation, I have learned simply by word of mouth of other incidents involving prescription errors," said D'Amico, whose practice is in Watertown.

D'Amico said the Glastonbury woman filed a complaint with the pharmacy as well as the drug control commission.

She also called him after reading articles about a Southington woman who died last year after taking the wrong prescription.

D'Amico represents two brothers whose mother, Donna Marie Altieri, died of after taking a teaspoon of opium tincture, a morphine-based drug with 25 times the

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## ERROR: Prescriptions are at issue

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potency of the diluted version her doctor had prescribed.

At first, doctors thought a heart attack had killed the 51-year-old woman. Her medical history included asthma and an ongoing bout with anxiety and depression.

But an autopsy and an independent investigation by her two sons and their lawyer proved otherwise, revealing that Altieri's June 15 death was a mistake — a CVS pharmacist erroneously filled the prescription with the wrong drug, they said.

"At face value, it's enough to make you sick," said Derek Altieri, 32, of New Jersey.

He and his 29-year-old brother,

Daren, a lawyer who lives in Woodbury, are so distressed over the circumstances surrounding their mother's death, they are on a crusade to ensure such a mistake does not happen again.

Possible action also includes a threatened lawsuit against the Rhode Island-based pharmacy chain.

Todd Andrews, CVS director of corporate communications, would not comment on the matter, which state officials have confirmed is the first case in Connecticut in which a pharmacist's error is known to have caused a death.

He released a statement in which the company extends its sympathy to the Altieri brothers and seeks to reassure customers that pharmacists are

working hard for them.

In an internal report signed by the pharmacist and kept by CVS, the pharmacist admits "wrong medication given out, possible overdosage associated with error" in Altieri's case.

Southington police have been investigating the case and expect to finish their probe in the next few months.

The state Commission of Pharmacy is conducting a separate review to determine what, if any, discipline is appropriate for the pharmacist and pharmacy in this case.

D'Amico also has heard from two other lawyers retained by people who allegedly have had problems with mis-filled prescriptions, D'Amico said.

He said civil action in those cases is pending.