Amanda Abbiehl

As told by Amanda’s parents, Brian and Cindy Abbiehl.

As parents of a teenage daughter, our worst fears were that our daughter would become pregnant, take drugs, or drink and drive. Never did we imagine that our daughter would go into a hospital with an infection, be hooked to a patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) pump to manage her pain, and never come out alive; but this is exactly what happened.

Our 18-year old daughter Amanda was admitted to a local hospital on Thursday, July 15, 2010. She was dehydrated, had lost at least 10 pounds, and had a virus that was causing a great deal of pain in her mouth and throat. Our family physician’s plan was to rehydrate her and put her on medications for both viral and bacterial infection. This was to help jumpstart her system and hopefully she would be back home with us in a couple days.

The rest of Thursday was a rough day for Amanda. The morphine that the hospital staff was giving her was not getting rid of the pain. Moreover, Amanda’s tonsils and uvula were extremely swollen. She was still not interested in eating; even drinking hurt. To help manage her pain, Amanda was put on a PCA pump that allowed her to control the pain medication used (hydromorphone).

The next morning, Amanda was found unresponsive and died.

We realize that we cannot get our daughter back, but we can raise awareness regarding respiratory depression, and in honor of our daughter we intend to make this our lifelong mission. We have started A Promise to Amanda Foundation to remind patients, their families, and their healthcare providers to always monitor PCA use with oximetry and capnography.