

Ted Bassett Interviewed by Spectrum News1, Autopsy Confirms Social Media Challenge a Factor in 14-year-old Harris Wolobah's Death

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An autopsy report confirms the viral “One Chip Challenge” led to the death of a Central Massachusetts teenager this past September.

The state’s Executive Office of Public Safety and Security confirmed to Spectrum News 1 that 14-year-old Harris Wolobah died as a result of a cardiopulmonary arrest in the setting of recent ingestion of food substance with high capsaicin concentration.

According to the office, Wolobah was living with an enlarged heart and a congenital heart defect, and the high amount of chili pepper extract only made things worse.

His parents at the time confirmed he participated in the challenge.

It’s composed of eating an extremely spicy tortilla chip, which registers more than one million Scoville heat units. For comparison, a jalapeño can be anywhere between 2,500 and 8,000.

Wolobah was a 10th grader at Doherty Memorial High School.

Personal injury attorney Ted Bassett told Spectrum News 1 there's in fact some form of negligence in this situation.

“All you have to prove in a products liability case or in a negligence case is that the product was a substantial contributing cause to the death or to the injury,” Bassett said. “And clearly the autopsy report refers to this ingestion of the product, as it is a substantial contributing cause. The easier test for a layperson to



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understand is the 'but for' test. But for him doing this within a day, well, clearly not. This is a precipitating factor. So, yes, he had a heart condition. There's nothing in there that says that he was going to die because of that heart condition. But for him ingesting this powerful, powerful spice."

There have been reported cases across the country of children getting ill after eating the chip.

Manufacturer Paqui pulled the popular "One Chip Challenge" from store shelves across the country in the days following Wolobah's death.

Spectrum News 1 reached out to the Hershey Company, who owns Paqui, but did not get a response as of Thursday afternoon.

Video of this story can be found here:

<https://spectrumnews1.com/ma/worcester/news/2024/05/16/autopsy-confirms-challenge-aided-in-teen-death>

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