

Submission to Senate Community Affairs References Committee

I am writing this submission as a result of my personal experience of the effects of transvaginal mesh implants.

Name and contact details

Name

[REDACTED]

Address

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Date of Birth 10 May 1959

Contact number

[REDACTED]

Email address

[REDACTED]

State New South Wales

Postcode 2486

Terms of Reference 1: The number of women in Australia who have been impacted

1. Have you or a family member had a transvaginal mesh implant?

☒ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, please share your experience:

Yes, a Hysterectomy was performed on 9 May 2006 with the insertion of a [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for vaginal prolapse.

2. Have you or your family member experienced adverse side effects as a result of the transvaginal mesh implant?
(full details are provided at Terms of Reference 5, below)

☒ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, please share your experience:

Yes, I suffered vaginal mesh erosion and prolapse and a further operation was performed 5 June 2007 to correct the prolapse and repair the mesh erosion - the mesh was not removed at this stage. The mesh continued to erode and I suffered severe lower abdominal pain and a very unpleasant discharge which forced me to wear sanitary pads both day and night for 8 years. A further operation was performed on 23 October 2015 where part of the mesh was removed and gross peritoneal infection was aspirated - the mesh could not be totally removed as it was located too close to my bowel for safe removal so I am left living in fear that the mesh may continue to erode and perforate my bowel or other organs.

Submission to Senate
Community Affairs References Committee



3. Have you or your family member had the mesh removed or made attempts to have the mesh removed in Australia or elsewhere? (full details are provided at Terms of Reference 7, below)

☒ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, please share your experience:

Yes, I had an operation on 5 June 2007 to correct the prolapse and repair the mesh erosion - the mesh was not removed at this stage. The mesh continued to erode and I suffered severe lower abdominal pain and a very unpleasant discharge which forced me to wear sanitary pads both day and night for 8 years. A further operation was performed on 23 October 2015 where part of the mesh was removed and gross peritoneal infection was aspirated - the mesh could not be totally removed as it was located too close to my bowel for safe removal so I am left living in fear that the mesh may continue to erode and perforate my bowel or other organs.

4. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations about changes to laws, policy and practices in relation to transvaginal mesh implants or similar products?

Yes, fully investigate all mesh implants along with complaints and complications made by people who have had it implanted and act on such complaints and complications.

Inform all recipients of all known complications and adverse effects to enable choices on whether to/or not have an implant.

Take responsibility for damages/injuries that have occurred as a result of an implant and fairly compensate for such damages.

The law needs to be changed to not allow use of implants without suitable investigations being made.

Terms of Reference 2: Information provided to women prior to surgery about possible complications and side effects

1. What information was given to you or your family member prior to surgery to implant the transvaginal mesh?

None, I was told that the mesh and tape implants were my only choices available to me to rectify prolapse.

I was not informed of any complications/adverse effects and was only given positive feedback.

2. How was this information provided to you? (eg. brochures, verbally, websites)

I only received verbal information there may have been brochures available but I can not remember ever receiving or reading any of these.

I was totally unaware of any other choices available to treat prolapse.

3. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations as to what information you think women should receive before they receive a transvaginal mesh implant?

Prior to having surgery all facts whether favourable or not should be made available to a all women so that an informed decision can be made taking into account all facts.

Submission to Senate
Community Affairs References Committee



Terms of Reference 3: Information provided to doctors regarding transvaginal mesh implants and possible complications and side effects

1. What is your experience of doctors' knowledge of transvaginal mesh implants, complications and side effects?

If my surgery had knowledge of any side effects/complications he did not inform me of any - was only told that the mesh implant was the only choice I had to rectify uterine prolapse.

2. Have you found information about transvaginal mesh including complications and side effects that your doctor (GP or specialists) was not aware of?

I researched mesh complications/side effects on the internet only after having my last operation and realised that I was not the only person suffering from complication post mesh insertion.

3. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations about what information you think doctors should be provided with in relation to transvaginal mesh?

Other options to mesh implants that are available
Adverse or side effects
Complications
Feedback whether positive or not

4. How could women adversely affected by transvaginal mesh implants tell their stories to doctors?

As part of group we can have voice a united/strong voice
Highlighting all facts that have occurred as a result of mesh implants
Publishing a list of known complications and side effects
Informing surgeons who conduct mesh implant surgery of all the ramifications of such surgery
Going public regarding all the complications of mesh implants

Terms of Reference 4: Any financial or other incentives provided to medical practitioners to use or promote transvaginal mesh implants

- 1. Do you know of or do you have evidence of incentives being provided to medical practitioners to use or promote transvaginal mesh implants?**

No none that I know of

- 2. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations about the provision of incentives to medical practitioners for using or promoting transvaginal mesh implants?**

Should be made public and they should be held accountable for damages that have occurred as a result of such incentives for mesh implants.

Terms of Reference 5: The types and incidence of health problems experienced by women with transvaginal mesh implants and the impact these health problems have had on their lives

- 1. This is the opportunity to tell your and/or your family member's story about how transvaginal mesh implants have affected you and your family. These impacts do not have to be limited to health issues but may also extend to issues around relationships, finances, employment or any other part of life that has been affected.**

The mesh implant caused severe lower abdominal pain and a vial odour discharge which was incredibly embarrassing. I was forced to wear sanitary pads both day and night for over 8 years to mask to odour.

Due to abdominal pain and odour I have not had any sexual activity for over 8 years (I do not have a partner) as it was too embarrassing to explain and as the mesh continued to erode it was exposed and rough so I avoided intimate situations at all cost.

It is humiliating to constantly be aware of personal odour and avoid intimacy and public places and made working with people very demanding.

After the mesh was finally partly removed I no longer have the discharge but I still live in fear that the remaining mesh may over time erode and as it is located so close to my bowel and other internal organs they may perforate and be life threatening.

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Terms of Reference 6: The Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) role in a) investigating the suitability of the implants for use in Australia; b) ongoing monitoring of the suitability of the implants; and c) knowledge of women suffering with health problems after having transvaginal mesh implants

1. What experience have you had with the TGA?

None

2. What do you think of the current work the TGA is undertaking in this area?

Tighter restrictions for mesh implants
Tighter regulations for mesh implants
Investigate all complications, side effects immediately
Recall mesh implants that are known to cause complications
Be accountable for actions - approving and authorising use of Mesh implants
Take responsibility/ownership of the problem that has been caused by mesh implants

3. What is needed to improve the work of the TGA in this area?

Awareness
Stricter laws
Compensation for suffers of complications of mesh implants
Tighter regulations
Tighter restrictions
Be accountable to actions - approving and authorising use of Mesh implants
Take responsibility/ownership of the problem that has been caused by mesh implants

Submission to Senate
Community Affairs References Committee



4. Are there other government agencies (apart from the TGA) who could or should have a role in this?

Medical/Surgical Departments
Consumer Affairs

5. In your opinion, is there anywhere (in Australia or internationally) that does a good job in these areas?

No

6. Do you have any recommendations about changes that might be needed to laws, policy and practices in relation to regulation of medical devices in Australia?

Consider all aspects of mesh implants prior to allowing them to be used.
Follow-up, investigation and act on all complaints, complications and side effects
Be responsible
Mindful of actions
Take ownership of the problem that has been caused by mesh implants

Terms of Reference 7: Options available to women to have transvaginal mesh removed

1. What is your experience of trying to have transvaginal mesh removed?

The mesh imbeds itself in the surrounding tissue and invades all adjacent organs which make removing the mesh once implanted a very dangerous and difficult operation.

It has the potential to perforate or seriously damage the bladder/bowel or any surrounding organs.

2. Do you know of anywhere (in Australia or internationally) where it is easier for women to have mesh removed?

No, it has taken me 8 years since first having the mesh inserted to having it partially removed in 2015.

3. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions about what would make it easier for women seeking to have mesh removed in Australia?

Government legislation to prevent this ever happening again and acknowledgment that there is in fact a problem and compensating the individuals that have suffered from mesh implants.

Someone needs to take responsibility and ownership of this problem before anything can be done (ticking time bombs)

Consumer watchdog that actually watches would be a start.

Submission to Senate
Community Affairs References Committee



Are there any final comments you would like to make?

As a mesh implant patient who trusted the medical profession to resolve my prolapse problem and not in fact inflict further complications/damage in the process.

I need a guarantee that this will not happen again to anyone else as there are too many women suffering through no fault of their own, just not fair.

As I still have part of the mesh implant attached how do I know if/when this may erode, perforate other organs or even more severe damage.

I have done nothing wrong just followed the advice of a trusted Surgical/Medical Profession and instead of protecting/repairing they have in fact given me a life sentence with a ticking time bomb (mesh implant) which can never be removed.

Consider that all mesh implant recipients that have had side effects, complication and emotion trauma to be fairly compensated for this trauma.

Submissions can be made to the Committee in writing by 31 May 2017 and should be sent to the Committee Secretariat contact:

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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If you would like more time to finalise your submission, an extension can be requested by emailing the secretariat at community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au or telephone on 02 62773515.