

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]

State South Australia

Postcode 5573

Date of Birth 5/7/1955

Contact number

[REDACTED]

Email address

[REDACTED]

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:

I had the [REDACTED] Mesh inserted in March 2010 for multiple prolapse\incontinence which is when my life turned to hell suffering daily pain & discomfort.

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:

Dr [REDACTED] my then Gynaecologist, informed me during my last visit with him, that I was his worst case & had been through more than anyone he knew & that after the complications I started having, he stopped using the mesh on other patients.

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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:

I've had 4 operations to remove it. After the last surgery Dr [REDACTED] performed on me, which from memory was in 2011, he promised me he had removed all of the mesh but with the ongoing pain & suffering worsening, in desperation I went back to him early 2014, convinced I still had some mesh. He reiterated that all the mesh had been removed & sent me to Dr [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for assessment to see if I would be suitable for an injection to help with the incontinence. It was during consultation with her & tests over 2 days in hospital, that she discovered I did in fact still have some mesh in me, so I was once again booked in for removal surgery.

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

I am at a loss to suggest anything other than not to use this product anywhere in the world.

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?

I was informed that some people have issues with the mesh but it was deemed my only hope of treating my multiple prolapse.

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

Verbally

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

Don't use this product ever.

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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?

I have no knowledge of what the doctor's know other than Dr [REDACTED] telling me that some patients have problems with the mesh. I was never told it may cause serious problems nor that it might need to be removed.

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

I don't know what my doctor was aware of. The only information I have had is what I have seen on support group sites where I learned I was not alone & shocked to find this is a common issue amongst so many patients.

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

Just don't use it! They need to invent something better.

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

I don't know other than visiting them

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

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

Do not use it!

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.**

I am a full time Carer for my now 30 year old daughter (Born premature at 28 weeks gestation she has undergone Neurosurgery 52 times to date & suffered numerous health issues). My husband has sustained a permanent major workplace injury & now only in receipt of Centrelink Jobsearch. We are desperately struggling financially & could lose everything before much longer as we have the same debts we had before my husband was forced to stop work & cannot afford for me to have health issues adding to all the stress, financial, physical & emotional.

We live 2hrs from Dr [REDACTED] Dr [REDACTED] & the hospitals that I need to attend. Therefore, not only do we have the fuel expenses & wear & tear on my car, but often I need to pay for overnight accommodation – before &/or after surgery or doctor's appointments on top of all Gap fees & medications. Then there's the cost of take-away meals etc.

I still suffer & am irritable most days as a consequence trying to cope with my health, while looking after my sick daughter & husband but reluctant to return for more investigations/surgery, so I am just trying to put up with it. Our sex life is non-existent as it is too painful & fortunately I have an understanding husband!

On top of all this my 90 year old mother is in a nursing home 2hrs from me & I am responsible for all her affairs while trying to travel to see her fortnightly while often in pain, but she has done so much for me that I just do it.

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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 whatsoever

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

I have no idea what they are doing I didn't even know they were

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

I have no idea

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

I don't know

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

I don't know

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?

I don't know what to recommend I am too exhausted just trying to get through each day to worry about what someone else should be doing

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?

I have undergone 4 operations to have it removed & I don't know if there is any still left or whether the pain is from the damage done

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

No

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

No, I wish I did

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Are there any final comments you would like to make?

I think I have covered it, just wish a decision would be made soon as this has been hanging over my head for years now.

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

Phone: +61 2 6277 3515
community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

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.