

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 22/03/1954

Contact number

[REDACTED]

Email address

[REDACTED]

State Western Australia

Postcode 6038

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 a uterus prolapse that did not protrude outside of my vagina along with a mild urinary urgency. It was more embarrassing than anything. I was referred to a specialist that advised me the mesh implant was the only option other than a hysterectomy. It was explained as an umbrella that would put my uterus back up. I wasn't made aware of risks or complications. Directly after the procedure I felt something was wrong as I had pain in my lower abdomen and back. I returned to the surgeon on two occasions with my concerns and was told everything was good. It wasn't till I returned on the second occasion the surgeon told me a pea shape size of the uterus.

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:

Painful intercourse. Fistula, Urinary Tract Infections, Back Pain, Pelvic spasms, Faecal and Urinary Urgency. Never being far away from a toilet when I leave the house.

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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 went to three surgeons to rectify my failed mesh implant surgery but was told it was next to impossible to remove the mesh as it was intertwined in tissue.

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

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 wasn't made aware of any complications or side effects. It was explained very simply as an umbrella that would open up inside the vagina to push the uterus back up into place. Relieve pressure of my uterus against my bladder. Symptoms would be resolved.

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?

That it cannot be removed and the success rate is poor.

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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?

Appears the surgeon i had, had little knowledge it was made to sound like it was non invasive, (Internal) simple and would rectify a prolapse without a hysterectomy.

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

Not at that time when i had mine done. Found information years later.

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

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

Perhaps a dedicated web page on their stories. Pamphlet.

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?**

No

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 effect of the [REDACTED] has been devastating and prolonged with ongoing issues and time of work to work through a resolution to the failed [REDACTED] mesh implant surgery. It impacted not only myself financially with long periods off work and not being able to stand for long periods due to pelvic and back pain, but my family also with time off work to look after me. My relationship with my partner at that time ended, due to the anguish, stress and the inability for sexual relations. I had another partner years later but was faced with the same issue in regards to sexual intercourse was painful for me still. In an attempt to help the painful sexual intercourse, I had three rounds of laser therapy in the hope this would help but it hasn't made any difference. My symptoms with faecal and urinary urgency worsened after the [REDACTED] implant, and remain till presently along with sharp twinges of pain intermittently in the lower centre pelvis area and back pain. I have had fistula also urinary tract infections which I was hospitalized with. Over the course of time since the [REDACTED] operation I feel I no longer can have a sexual relationship which has left me feeling depressed and alone. My worry is if and when the mesh implant will cause me any further surgery or complications into the future.

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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?

No knowledge

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

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

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

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?

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?

Not possible tissue grown over the mesh

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?

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Are there any final comments you would like to make?

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.