PE1517EEE
Carolyn Chisholm (Australian Pelvic Mesh Support Group) submission of 11 September 2017

I had a TVT-O implanted for stress urinary incontinence and suffered pain from the moment of implant right up to the date of full removal 9 months later. I could not get my device fully removed in Australia. I had to fly to the USA for full removal due to the lack of expert removal surgeons in my country. I have permanent damage and pain from the device and my life is now very restricted. Exercise is limited. When I garden it is very painful to bend. I dread doing housework because I know I am going to suffer. I have pain in my legs every day and it worsens when I become active.

It is beyond my comprehension that these pelvic mesh devices for prolapse and stress incontinence continue to be implanted in women given the current following revelations from media worldwide and the evidence in the inconsistent outcomes of studies.

These operations have left women with permanent and debilitating nerve damage, some have lost their bowels and bladders due to migration or strangulation from the mesh, constant infections requiring antibiotics, loss of sex life, recurring urinary tract infections, debilitating pain that can only be managed with the strongest of pain medications, partial removals of the mesh that cause even more complications, the breakdown of marriage and family - there is a huge financial, physical and psychological price that these women are paying and as time goes by, more women and families will suffer while mesh continues to be implanted.

The management and treatment of these complications is very limited and the best result for all women suffering is full removal of these devices however, this is not an option in most countries worldwide because experienced removal surgeons are rare and full removal of these devices is dangerous and complex and this is why mesh should never have been used in a woman’s pelvis.

700 women are in an Australian class action against Johnson and Johnson for damages caused by their pelvic mesh devices for stress incontinence devices prolapse.

350 women are in an Australian class action against American Medical Systems for damages caused by their pelvic mesh devices for stress incontinence and prolapse.

Over 100,000 women in the USA are in mass tort cases against manufacturers for damages caused by their pelvic mesh devices for stress incontinence and prolapse.

The NHS in the UK are being sued by over 900 women for damages caused by pelvic mesh devices for stress incontinence and prolapse.

Three states in the USA are suing Johnson and Johnson for being dishonest about the damages that can be caused by pelvic mesh devices - Kentucky, California and Washington.

There is a current senate inquiry in Australia looking into the number of devices implanted (no-one actually knows), how many women are damaged, the severity of the damage, and who is responsible and what is Australia going to do about it?

A thorough investigation is what is needed to find answers to the worldwide suffering and to stop this catastrophe from continuing.

- Find out how these devices were ever approved starting from the fact that many approvals are based on predicate devices without any long term studies deemed necessary.

- Investigate the aggressive marketing of these devices by the manufacturers to the surgeons.

- Investigate the surgeons and find out why any gynaecologist is allowed to implant mesh devices without first having experience of performing native tissue repair as part of their specialist training before using mesh.

- Investigate why surgeons are choosing mesh over native tissue repair and does it have to do with cost

- Investigate surgeons that are implanting yet are unable to fully remove.

148 women responded to a poll with the following options:

I have a midurethral sling/tape made from mesh for stress incontinence and I have complications (69)
I have a mesh for prolapse and I have complications (48)
I have a midurethral aling and a prolapse mesh and I have complications (31)

46% have complications from the midurethral sling
32% have complications from prolapse mesh
31% have complications from the combined midurethral sling and prolapse mesh

Mesh does not discriminate. All mesh has risks that can be catastrophic.

I just cannot understand why we are still debating this worldwide mesh disaster.
When are injured women going to be taken seriously?
Why do we have to fight so hard for a real solution?

Implanting mesh in a woman’s pelvis is inhumane and it needs to stop NOW.