

Senate Inquiry Thursday August 3rd 2017

My name is Kim Blieschke I am a mother of 4 children, career paramedic, registered Nurse, I also manage a household and a family and support my partner in a family business.

I am a mesh injured Woman

I had Trans vaginal mesh implanted for Pelvic Organ Prolapse in March 2006 and experienced complications almost immediately following this surgery, and still experience these debilitating issues 11 years later.

The effects of Trans-vaginal Mesh has caused life altering effects to myself and my family, physically, emotionally and financially. It has impacted both my personal and professional life.

Mesh has impacted me in many ways, it has robbed me of quality time with my family and friends, it has limited severely my everyday activities that I enjoyed prior to mesh implantation, cycling, walking, spending quality time with my children and partner has been made almost impossible due to extreme pain, fatigue and embarrassing increasing incontinence which I believe is a direct result of mesh.

My mesh was removed in St Louis USA in January 2016 following a 5.5 hour Surgery (very difficult and complicated) I had explored the option of removal in Australia but found that no surgeon here in Australia could guarantee me full and safe removal without further substantial injury (urostomy, colostomy) as the mesh was found to be embedded in my bladder, bowel and rectum and it was feared that the mesh could not be removed safely without further damage.

Informed Consent

I believe that I had I been given further information about the specific and serious side effects of mesh implantation, I would not have considered this surgical intervention, I believe that women are not given fully informed consent prior to considering Mesh implantation for both Pelvic Organ Prolapse or Stress Urinary Incontinence. All women should be supplied the comprehensive list of possible adverse events that is now available on the TGA website, I believe this is still not happening as I have spoken to women whom have had mesh implants as recently as 6 weeks ago who have not been given this information.

Suspension, Mandate reporting and Registry

I believe that TVM should be immediately suspended pending and independent inquiry into its safety and efficacy (I personally would like to see it banned) I believe that there are no accurate statistics to show how many women have been adversely affected by TVM for a number of reasons

- The actual number of women whom have been implanted with TVM for POP and SUI is unknown
- There are no known registers in Australia that accurately record these surgeries/implants
- There is no mandate to report failure/complications or adverse effects of these implants by Doctors, Surgeons and Hospitals.
- I believe that this number may be in the tens of thousands, I feel the medical profession is still arguing as to whether these events are intact even failures or complications. I believe they feel we are collateral damage.

There should I believe be regular follow up of women post implantation of TVM at 6 weeks, 3 months and then 12 monthly for life to ensure that any adverse effects can be treated appropriately .

Statement

I help administer an online support group of approximately 1100 women and this number grows daily.

Some days this page brings me to tears, women unable to work, enduring so much pain they are unable to leave their homes.

I see women battle to come to terms with the physical, mental and emotional harm caused to them by an operation that they were assured had low risks , and was an effective treatment option “ideal for busy Mums “

women unable to intimate with their partners/husbands due to pain many of whom then see their partners/husbands walk away unable to physically or emotionally support their wives/ partners

Mesh is not inert, it can shrink and degrade when implanted, it cuts into tissue, nerves and organs, it erodes through vaginal walls and urethras. Mesh is very easily implanted but is almost impossible to remove. I have had it described as “ trying to get a rod out of concrete “

Mesh is inserted “blind” into the pelvis with large tracers being pushed through flesh, muscle nerves and vessels.

To quote my mesh removal surgeon

“ A society is sometimes judged by the way it treats its women and children and I think this is a very dark chapter “

Recommendations

I would like to call on this Senate inquiry to

1. Suspend the use of polypropylene Trans-vaginal Mesh implanted
2. Initiate an independent inquiry/royal commission and or comprehensive research to evaluate all mesh devices using all available evidence including that from overseas.
3. Introduce mandatory reporting of all adverse events/ incidents by health professionals
4. Set up an Australian Trans vaginal mesh implant register with a view to linking this up with national and international registers
5. To introduce fully truly informed consents with uniformity throughout Australian Health Boards
6. Write to the TGA and ask/demand that they reclassify TVM devices to heightened alert status to reflect ongoing concerns world wide.
7. Explore further training of suitably qualified Surgeons to explore full removal of TVM or sponsor existing expert surgical removalists to visit Australia to either remove mesh or train others in their expertise .
8. Inform General practitioners of the effects of mesh and its adverse events/complications