

# Petitioner submission of 16 February 2024

## PE1865/PPPP: Suspend all surgical mesh and fixation devices

There seems to be the misconception with the Scottish Government that we have asked for a ban on mesh. This isn't our ask. Our ask is to *suspend* its use, unless in emergency situations, whilst we establish guidelines around its use. How much? When? By whom? We feel the Scottish Government have a duty of care to every citizen in this country and currently they are failing us. They should be ensuring these devices are safe and fit for purpose which they aren't. We are evidence of that. How many people are acceptable to be harmed as collateral damage?

Currently we're still not seeing any patient pathways being implemented for those damaged by mesh implants other than transvaginal mesh. That doesn't seem to be functioning very well for woman suffering as it is.

We're still not hearing things have changed with the options given to patients or informed consent being used.

When Marie Todd was Minister for Women's Health, she and Terry O'Kelly told the Committee they agreed we had to bridge the gap between natural tissue repair and mesh repair. We've still not seen any evidence progress is being made on that either.

The SHTG report on the use of hernia mesh stated natural tissue repair should be offered to patients. Patient feedback we receive suggests this isn't happening, meaning patients aren't being given a choice and aren't being fully informed about the risks of using mesh.

The Scottish Government are also stating transvaginal mesh is banned in Scotland. That's not true. They place it pelvically now which this petition also covers. They also state all hernia mesh is safe. How can they state that when mesh manufacturers are being sued worldwide and admitting failings with mesh devices that the Scottish NHS still buy and use?

We asked the Committee to take expert advice from The Shouldice Hospital. The Committee heard about their use of natural tissue, and how mesh is used only where there is no other option. Evidence from Shouldice shows the use of natural tissue repair has not resulted in

chronic pain or debility. Since the influx of mesh this is more apparent. Shouldice, however, have very strict rules to natural repair (i.e. weight of a patient) for their technique and surgery to be successful. The Scottish Government seem to be stuck on that point and therefore don't think Scotland can utilise in this type of surgery.

We are aware of other specialists and surgeons across the world who also do hernia repairs with natural tissue and other natural stitch techniques. Would the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee be willing to hear evidence of more techniques that aren't so strict on weight issues?

Again like the transvaginal mesh campaign, Dr Veronikis could possibly speak about issues related to the use of rectopexy mesh, as he is removing this mesh as well as transvaginal mesh. Dr Veronikis is also doing repairs for this using a patient's own tissue. So that's another surgery this well-known surgeon is doing due to complications of mesh.

There is a surgeon at the Beverly Hills Hernia Centre who has developed her own hernia technique, using natural tissue. She is also successful in mesh removal surgery.

There are also surgeons here in Scotland the Committee could hear from. This includes an Edinburgh surgeon who has a specific interest in hernia repair and weight loss surgery, and has successfully removed mesh. Another surgeon, based in Glasgow, with an interest in hernia surgery also has experience of removing mesh from patients.

Other potential experts the Committee could invite evidence from include:

- A gynaecologist from El Paso, Texas, who is campaigning on the complications caused by fixation devices (i.e. titanium protaks etc.) He is very much aware of complications on transvaginal and hernia meshes as well as mesh being used in woman after caesarean sections.
- A German surgeon working in London who has her own technique for inguinal repair without mesh. She also successfully removes mesh.
- A hernia surgeon from London, again doing removal and natural tissue repair, who used to be the go-to surgeon for NHS England.

- A hernia surgeon from Manchester successfully removing mesh and repairs in natural tissue.

We would be happy to provide the Committee with details on how to contact these specialists if required.

While the Shouldice Hospital are pioneers in the world of hernia repair, their techniques have been adapted by others who may be able to work with and provide advice to the Scottish Government. We can't just look at one. We need the Government to realise these surgeons are out there as there is a need for them. They are adapting techniques for the better of humans. We think it's important to see how many different techniques there are with a difference of opinions. Most of these surgeons work within the European Hernia Society and the British Hernia Society.