

Requests to the First Minister

Scottish Mesh Survivors
On behalf of the Mesh-Injured Women in Scotland

25 November 2019

We welcome our much anticipated meeting with the First Minister and hope it will be productive.

Baroness Cumberlege, Chair of the UK Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review (IMMDSR) has met with Scottish mesh-injured women twice in Glasgow and once in Westminster and we are pleased to learn that our Evaluation of Scottish Mesh Complication Service was considered a 'Key Study' by The UK IMMDSR and is being published in the Mesh Timeline.

Our Service Evaluation, first published by Scottish Parliament, shows:

- All women who had partial mesh removal surgery continue to suffer the same chronic pain.
- Half of the women surveyed are too scared to have any mesh removal surgery and prefer to suffer chronic pain than undergo inadequate risky surgery.

To address these serious matters, we urge Ms Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister, to commit to the following steps to improve the service provided to the mesh-injured women in Scotland.

A) The full Independent Review of the Mesh Complications Service in Scotland to report by Spring 2020

The Review must learn from Professor Alison Britton's recommendations in her Investigative Report and must focus on the following:

1. How many women have suffered life-changing mesh implant complications in Scotland? How many women are suffering at home and are not part of our campaign group?
2. How many women in Scotland had complete mesh implant removal?
3. How many women had partial mesh removal when they were told or believed they had complete mesh removal?
4. What is the outcome of both partial and total mesh removal surgery in terms of continuing symptoms and suffering of chronic pain?

B) Ensuring the proposed treatment and training offered by Dr Dionysis Veronikis in Scotland is completed by Spring 2020

C) A fully functional Complex Mesh Case Review Unit that is up and running by Spring 2020

We welcomed Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport Ms Jeane Freeman's announcement (on 19th June 2019) that this Unit will be established but we have heard nothing about it since. To improve the service, we ask the First Minister to commit to the following:

Representatives from mesh-injured women to be part of the service design.

All women considering mesh removal surgery must be:

- **Offered a Patient-Decision-Aid (PDA)** to help them better understand all risks before making the difficult decision to undergo removal surgery. The PDA will help prevent any further ambiguity between patients and surgeons with regards to partial and total mesh implant removal surgery. Attached is an example PDA developed by Dr Agur with our input, to be considered.
- **Offered attendance at the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Meeting** discussing their complex case. Patient attendance is crucial for the team to truly understand the ongoing issues and to treat us with dignity.
- **Offered a pelvic floor scan – Translabial Ultrasound or Volume MRI** before surgery to guide removal and after surgery to ensure complete removal.
- **Offered a copy of the photographs of their removed mesh implant** which must be photographed next to a ruler, with patient details and dated.
- **Given the right to seek help elsewhere in or outside the UK** if they do not wish to go back to those who implanted them with mesh in the first place or those who attempted mesh removal or if women are not satisfied with the outcome of MDT discussions, and all options in Scotland have been exhausted.

D) Postpone all non-urgent mesh removal surgery until the above 3 requirements are fulfilled.

This is a safety matter. The service cannot continue routine operations until the Complex Case Review Unit is established, surgical training by Dr Veronikis is complete and the commissioned Independent Review has yielded its results on how miscommunication had happened with regards to what is partial mesh removal and what is complete mesh removal.

Ten days ago, the IMMDSR Team took initial steps in the interests of patient safety with regards to mesh removal surgery. The Team preferred to wait until after the general election before publishing further details.

E) Ban the purchase of all pelvic mesh implants in Scotland

The First Minister will be aware of last week's landmark judgement from The Federal Court of Australia in the class action against the main mesh manufacturer. The Judge found all mesh implants were '**not fit for purpose**' and of '**unmerchantable quality**'. We urge the First Minister not to wait for the MHRA to do so, because it will not. The MHRA still believes the benefits of all pelvic mesh devices outweigh their risks.

Finally, we were vindicated when the First Minister admitted in Parliament in October that **inserting mesh** has been a scandal in Scotland and elsewhere – she believed us. We urge the First Minister not to allow **removing mesh** to become the new medical scandal.

Kind regards

Elaine Holmes and Olive McIlroy
On behalf of Scottish Mesh Survivors Group
<http://www.scottishmeshsurvivors.com/>
Enclosures:

- Mesh Service Evaluation – Co-designed by Patients and Clinicians
- SBAR Document – Submitted to Accountable Officers Group in June 2019
- Mesh Removal Surgery – Patient Decision Aid