

PE1517/MMMM

Dr Dionysios K. Veronikis submission of 3 September 2020

Thank you for your correspondence and for the Committee's longstanding work on hearing the voices of the mesh injured women of Scotland.

I have been made aware of this morning's Petitions Committee session on Mesh and the Committee's continued wish to speak to me. I acknowledge the members' disappointment that I have not responded to date.

First, I would like to apologise to the Committee for the delay in responding. My priorities are biased to patient care.

My situation as an international surgeon is difficult. I have tried to avoid any involvement in local politics and mesh politics. My genuine commitment to deliver the project of performing mesh removal surgeries in Scotland on the mesh injured women has involved many hours of my time.

In November 2019 I hosted Scotland's CMO and clinician team in St Louis. At that point, I was optimistic that the project would materialise.

It is now September 2020 and the project has collapsed. I sent a letter to Minister Freeman on September 2, 2020, reiterating the content of several letters written since November 2019. I enclose the most recent letter for ease of reference.

At this juncture, I would welcome the opportunity to video conference with the Committee to explain from my perspective why this project has proven impossible to deliver. I am happy to answer any questions. I would suggest that this is the most expedient way forward.

Annexe

Email to: Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport
September 2, 2020

Dear Cabinet Secretary Freeman,

Thank you for your letter of August 11, 2020. I hope you are well during these pandemic times.

Respectfully, it is my view that this exchange of letters has become tainted with the politics of mesh. As I have stated previously: I am a surgeon, not a politician.

In the past, my goodwill has been tested. I had withdrawn my offer to Scotland. I was then given assurances by the First Minister of Scotland and I came back on board with the project. Regretfully, promises made to me by the appointed officials were not delivered. This was the reason why I withdrew my offer for a second and final time.

Since then, I have not changed my position. My language is plain and clear. It is not open to interpretation. All past cooperation has collapsed. It is over. My goodwill is exasperated. I am certain that my two hundred plus hours invested in these negotiations would have been better spent operating on twenty mesh injured women.

I feel obliged to respond to letters with increasingly reiterative content. I have written repeatedly and clearly stated that I have withdrawn my offer. Yet, no matter the content of my response, the default response from yourself and the Scottish government to me personally and to the public is: 'Scotland's offer to Dr. Veronikis remains open.'

Minister, this project was always a non-starter without the specific commitment from the host country, Scotland, to sponsor my surgical activity as required by the General Medical Council's Eminent Visiting Surgeon regulatory pathway. After more than a year, yourself, as the Cabinet Secretary, and the Scottish government and its NHS officials should have identified the requisite sponsors for my visit.

Having hosted Scotland's CMO Calderwood and its lead mesh surgeons, Ms. Karen Guerrero and Ms. Voula Granitsiotis, I was led to believe that these individuals were endorsing my visit.

Imagine my great astonishment when, upon her return from the St. Louis visit, CMO Calderwood suggested that I attend a symposium in Scotland in Spring 2020 and that I 'work' the crowd for a sponsor. This was a U-turn of progress made during our face-to-face discussion in St Louis, when CMO Calderwood had promised me that the GMC process would be completed by December 2019 at the latest. It was on this basis that I agreed in principle to a short visit to Scotland in the spring to complete a schedule of activities, including reviewing patient files. The pre-requisite to any travel to Scotland was that CMO Calderwood would complete, as promised, the sponsorship aspect of the GMC application. This U-turn was a clear message to me that neither CMO Calderwood nor the clinicians were committed to this project.

Minister, I am surprised that under your direction and that of the First Minister that such non-action was permitted.

For clarity's sake, I have never received a written offer from the First Minister, yourself, the Scottish CMO or any other government or NHS official. I had taken the project partners that you appointed at their word and have been disappointed.

My original offer to come to Scotland to help the mesh injured women is the only offer that ever existed. This offer, the offer that *I* extended, remains permanently withdrawn.

From my perspective, I have been extremely cooperative, and my goodwill has been abused.

Respectfully, I request that public record is corrected and that all reference to Dr. Veronikis ceases as no such offer exists.

Kind regards
Dionysios K. Veronikis, MD, FACOG, FACS