

19 April 2012

## SENATE COMMITTEE SUBMISSION

### **The role of the Government and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) regarding medical devices, particularly Poly Implant Prothese (PIP) breast implants**

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To whom it may concern,

I write with reference to the senate inquiry: *The role of the Government and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) regarding medical devices, particularly Poly Implant Prothese (PIP) breast implants.*

The following surmises the ordeal my family and I have endured as a result of the Poly Implant Prothese (PIP). While words give our continuing angst little justice, I felt it necessary to submit my story to the inquiry.

After years of struggling with extreme low self-esteem concerning my appearance, I decided to investigate breast surgery during 2006/2007. I had small, asymmetrical breasts that caused me considerable distress through my teenage and early adult years. I was finally in the financial position to consider surgery, but wanted to first consider my options and eligibility.

I met with a number of cosmetic and plastic surgeons throughout Perth to discuss the surgical correction of my asymmetry. As a close friend had undergone breast augmentation with surgeon A, I decided to proceed with his services. I underwent surgery on 17 April 2007, when surgeon A inserted PIP devices into my left and right breasts. I was not given a choice of implant manufacturer.

The results of my surgery were – at the very least – undesirable. I sought the advice of surgeon B, whose reputation and professionalism ensured me he would fix the problems from my first surgery and finally correct my asymmetry. As surgeon A had used PIP implants previously, surgeon B decided to continue with the use of the PIP devices. On 19 November 2007, I underwent the corrective surgery and was very happy with the results.

On 19 May 2010 – given the controversy and media coverage regarding the PIP devices – I had an appointment with surgeon B to check my breasts and implants. He examined my breasts and was confident no ruptures had occurred, but recommended I have them checked regularly. At the end of 2011, I contacted surgeon B again and he examined my breasts on 16 January 2012. As I was three months pregnant with my first child, he recommended I have an ultrasound of my breast implants. The ultrasound on 30 January 2012, detected a rupture of my right implant.

The distress this aroused in my husband, our family and myself is unimaginable. Not only was my health in jeopardy, but that of our unborn child. Subsequent discussions with surgeon B, my anaesthetist, and my obstetrician confirmed the need for me undergo surgery to remove the PIP implants. My consulting medical professionals are all plasticising heads in their respective fields at . It created enormous concern that all believed the risk of surgery to me and my unborn child was less than that of leaving these implants inside my body.

We all understood the implants needed to be removed; however, consideration was given to replacement with new implants. This consideration brought about immense anguish for my husband and me. Having suffered distress for years concerning my body images issues due to asymmetry of my natural breasts, corrective surgery with surgeon B had helped my self-confidence immeasurably. We could have the implants replaced, but our trust in these devices had now wavered. The potential risks of implant replacement were too high, and outweighed the positives to my self-esteem.

I placed my self-confidence issues aside, and thought only of the health of my unborn child. I had both implants removed on 2 March 2012. The surgery took 2.5 hours, more than twice the expected time. The ruptured right implant was an absolute mess. While it has taken a number of weeks to recover, I have not since experienced the pain and discomfort I used to feel. I often complained of pain in my breasts and on my chest, along with tingling down my right arm. I never knew what this was from, and often let my imagination run wild with possible explanations. Now, I am sure these sensations were due to the PIP implants.

Unfortunately, however, the deep concern for my family, unborn child, and myself is not over. On 13 March 2012, I had a follow-up ultrasound of my breasts, which detected a lymph node located under my right arm to contain silica. We have been devastated by this latest finding. We thought removing the implants completely would have allayed our worries and we could focus on enjoying the remaining months of my pregnancy. This is certainly not the case. The knowledge that possibly industrial grade silicon is present in my body fails to give my husband or myself any relief from worry concerning future issues regarding my health and that of our unborn child.

What affect is this having on my unborn child? As the lymph node is close to my breast, can I breast feed safely? Will this silicon get into my breast milk and affect my child? These are the questions I am now left to answer by myself because no one else knows.

While I have briefly outlined my story, the physical and emotional trauma these PIP implants have caused my family and I are beyond measure. I have undergone three surgeries, one of which placed my unborn child and me at risk. I have ended up my with breast more disfigured than prior to any surgery. I have been left with industrial grade silicon and other chemicals inside of me, potentially endangering my child and myself. I simply suffered the low self-esteem issues many women have with their breasts and decided to accept the promise of plastic surgery to overcome these. My child, my family, and I do not deserve this ongoing ordeal during a time that should be one of celebration.

Yours sincerely,