

PE1517/UUUU

Petitioners' submission of 16 March 2021

It has been eight years since Scottish Mesh Survivors first launched their Hear Our Voice Campaign, seven years since we lodged our petition to the Public Petitions Committee.

We're grateful to have received outstanding support and understanding from politicians from every party, who immediately saw, and recognised, this is the biggest medical scandal of modern times with even more victims than Thalidomide.

Right from the moment former Health Secretary Alex Neil saw for himself, the devastating, life changing injuries caused to thousands of women across Scotland because of a piece of plastic polypropylene used to treat bladder issues and pelvic organ prolapse, he had the courage to defy medics and officials to introduce the first mesh suspension in the world.

International courts declared many devices to be defective, manufacturers have paid £hundreds of billions to victims in the US. Some even paid compensation to governments for damage done to hundreds of thousands of women rather than face prosecution.

While Scotland initially led the way since 2014 real progress has stalled as, in our view, officials and Health Secretaries deflected blame and failed to hold responsible manufacturers or those who flouted the suspension to implant around a thousand more women, then misled patients about carrying out full removals.

While women in the US received millions of pounds in compensation, here, despite promises we would be listened to and not forced to return to surgeons who implanted, who we've lost all trust in, the new Mesh Centre of Excellence is today staffed by some of those very surgeons.

The government's own appointed mesh expert reported concerns over the skills and success rates of this service.

Despite our concerns, and his, we are expected to accept treatment from surgeons who denied for years mesh was causing injuries so bad, many of us ended up in wheelchairs. Other UK surgeons behaved in the same way.

We have no confidence any of them have the required skills to fully remove mesh devices without causing more damage.

The Cumberlege Review laid bare their actions. Patients were disbelieved, betrayed and let down. Baroness Cumberlege said: *"I've never encountered anything like this: the intensity of suffering endured by so many families, and they have endured it for decades."*
"Much of this suffering was entirely avoidable, caused and compounded by failings in the health system itself...it has been a shocking and truly heart rending experience."
"We owe it to the victims of these failings, and to thousands of future patients to do better."

The NHS introduced mesh implants solely to save around £200 per procedure, but the human damage caused to some has been incalculable.

The very least we deserve now is to be treated by a surgeon we trust, one with a proven track record of thousands, Dr Dionysius Veronikis in the US.

Despite assurances to us, and parliament, Scotland missed out on the opportunity to have us treated by this world class surgeon who was willing to come here and help us, not only free of charge, but to also help train our surgeons in the unique tissue sparing technique that's won him the gratitude of the thousands of mesh injured women he has successfully treated – including those from Scotland told by surgeons here they were mesh free when they were anything but.

Instead of thanking him, the way he was treated by Scottish government officials and surgeons was nothing short of disgraceful. Their behaviour towards this world respected expert shamed us all.

We have been engaging with our government for eight years, telling them what patients need and want. Instead of listening and fulfilling their obligation to us, they wasted years and funds on reviews – then reviews to review the reviews.

The Scottish government could have followed Quebec which spent their money refunding patients who got the treatment they needed from a surgeon they trust – Dr Veronikis. Instead, our government wasted time and money covering issues we robustly covered with them years ago, engaging the Health and Social Care Alliance – which is already funded to the tune of around £5million a year.

Money and time squandered instead of simply doing the right thing. If only they had, by now, hundreds of us would have had the mesh removal treatment we need with Dr Veronikis or a surgeon of our choice.

Time is running out now.

Every week that passes, women continue suffering pain under the ever present threat of sepsis which has already claimed the lives of far too many mesh injured women.

Our fight has never been political. It's been about human suffering, and doing the right thing when catastrophic scandals like mesh happen.

We believe our [mesh charter](#) will protect women in future, give us access to the care we need to recover what we can of our lives, and set in place a workable foundation for change.

Please do what Alex Neil did in 2014.

Look at what has been done to us because we listened to, and trusted, surgeons who told us a simple twenty-minute procedure would change our lives.

Even after all that has happened, virtually none of those surgeons have yet to admit that, for so many of us, those changes would lead to a life of disability and pain.

We are all the evidence you need to see what needs to be done.

Support our mesh charter. Allow us to cease fighting to concentrate on reclaiming what is left of our broken lives – thank you.