

The psychological impact of the PIP breast implants scandal on a cohort of UK women.

Nicholas Segaren, MD, James Taylor, MD, Onur Gilleard, MD, Kumaran Shanmugarajah, MD, Neil Segaren, MD, Sheraz Markar, MD.

Background: It has been reported that 400,000 women worldwide received PIP implants consisting of non-manufacture grade silicone. The associations of this prosthesis with high rupture rates and cancers such as anaplastic large cell lymphoma have the potential to inflict serious psychological trauma on a cohort of women who are already vulnerable following a diagnosis of breast cancer. (1)

Objective: In the UK there was a huge amount of media publicity following the outbreak of the scandal that led to thousands of women demanding information from the medical community. This study was undertaken to assess the risk of developing psychological disorders in a susceptible group of women.

Methods: 100 breast cancer patients who received implants for reconstructive purposes were asked to complete the Impact of Event Scale (IES) questionnaire. The IES consists of 15 short questions that give a total score out of 75. This numerical score can then be used to quantify how stressful an event has been. The questionnaire can identify less intense forms of stress right through to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Results: 92% of the women surveyed reported a score that impacted on their life in some way. 31% had a score that equated to the event having a powerful impact on their life and 9% produced a score that when interpreted meant that the event had a severe impact on their life and was thus capable of altering their ability to function.

Conclusions: The reported costs of the scandal to the British government could run to over £150 million. The cost to the mental health of all who have been involved is impossible to calculate. The medical community has a responsibility to limit the psychological impacts of this traumatic event by arranging appropriate counselling and timely intervention to support these women.

References:

1. Berry MG, Stanek JJ. The PIP mammary prosthesis: a product recall study. *J Plast Reconstr Aesthet Surg.* 2012 Jun;65(6):697-704

Disclosure

None of the authors has a financial interest in any of the products, devices, or drugs mentioned in this manuscript.