



Jersey man gets 'second chance of life' after hernia mesh removal

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A Jerseyman says he has been given a "second chance at life" having had his hernia mesh removed after experiencing seven years of chronic pain.

Martin O'Neil was fitted with the polypropylene mesh in Jersey in 2014 after he discovered he had a hernia in his groin - and says he was not advised on the risks of chronic pain beforehand.

Almost overnight he was left in crippling pain which meant he was unable to play in his band, go to work, or even walk round the block on certain days.

Martin spent weeks in and out of intensive care with multiple complications and infections.

After ongoing consultation with the hospital and hernia experts abroad, it was agreed that the States of Jersey would fund Martin's mesh removal by an expert in Germany.

The removal process, which is highly complex and can result in further complications, is only routinely performed by a small number of surgeons worldwide.

In the UK mesh removals have been on hold during the coronavirus pandemic - and Martin's surgery in Germany was delayed until June this year.

Just days before it was due to go ahead his medical exemptions were lifted by the German government and he and his aunt were forced to self-isolate in the country for two weeks.

Although the Jersey government had agreed to help fund his some of expenses, Martin was suddenly faced with extra costs, as well as the prospect of losing his income support payment if he remained away from Jersey for more than 28 days.

Unbeknown to Martin, his friend and neighbour set up a crowdfunding page, raising more than £5,000 to cover his additional costs.

Martin returned to Jersey last week (16 July) having successfully had all of the mesh removed and says he feels like a new man.

"I don't have a sixty stone man standing on me with football boots rubbing it in. I wake up in the morning waiting for this feeling and it's gone. I'm going to choke as much goodness as I can get out of this because it's a second chance of life. The things that I've missed out on in the last seven years- my cousin's wedding, my drummer's wedding. I was best man- I had to do a speech from hospital!"

Martin O'Neil

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Martin, who has been raising awareness about the dangers of mesh for a number of years, is determined to see it banned globally.

He has called for an investigation into his case, as well as the appointment of an independent medical Ombudsman to improve the current complaints system.

“This is just the beginning. It took six years to be believed. This is where we need to come to to make things better. If this option's offered first for a natural repair then secondary must come the mesh in a life or death situation but it must only be implanted, in my view, by a surgeon who can remove it. We want this banned because of what it's done to us. So we won't stop until it is banned.”

Martin O'Neil

There have been hundreds of reports from people like Martin left in chronic pain as a result of hernia mesh fittings.

Vaginal mesh surgery was suspended across the British Isles in 2018 after a review warned of the risk of "life-threatening injuries".

However there is divided opinion among hernia experts about the safety of the mesh.

According to the Royal College of Surgeons as many as one in ten experience chronic pain after hernia mesh surgery.

However ITV Channel freedom of information requests found over a thousand people have been fitted with a hernia mesh in Jersey and Guernsey in the last five years, but fewer than ten of those have suffered chronic pain afterwards.

There are alternative surgical methods which are not routinely offered in the British Isles but some experts say they do not necessarily achieve better results and the problem should be investigated further.

“You have an equal chance of experiencing pain if you have the tissue repair or the Shouldice repair but there's a higher chance of recurrence. In experienced hands, they are comparable in terms of recurrence. So I think that's something for the Hernia Fraternity to look at. Maybe we should try and encourage more people to learn the Shouldice repair because it's all about giving patients an option.”

Professor Aali Sheen, President of the British Hernia Society

The British Hernia Society is campaigning for a mesh implant registry to gather further data on the impact of surgery.


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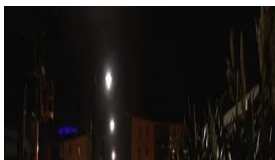
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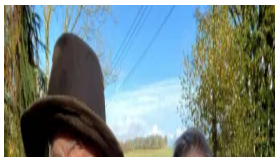
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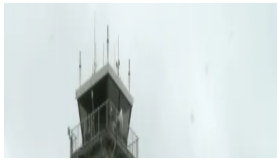
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