

Breast implant scandal: 'Remove all faulty implants'

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However, that advice was based on the rupture rate quoted by the Medical Healthcare and products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) of just one per cent.

But at the weekend Transform, Britain's biggest cosmetic surgery company, disclosed that its own figures showed seven per cent of PIP implants had ruptured since 2006.

As a result Andrew Lansley, the Health Secretary, has asked the MHRA to review the data amid concerns incidents have been under-reported.

Mr Lansley has also asked a group of experts to look at the figures as well, and make recommendations about what can be done about the situation.

Mr Goodacre said that all the faulty implants should be removed if Transform's seven per cent figure is validated.

"Certainly to get rupture rates that Transform are talking about is entirely unacceptable," he said. "If that is happening and they can validate the data in any meaningful way, then these implants need to be taken out."

Should the review panel reach such a conclusion, it would enormously increase the pressure on the Department of Health to fund blanket removal, which could cost £150 million.

The French state has already agreed to fund such removals - some 30,000 operations - due to the high risk of rupture. In France the official rupture rates with the PIP implants is five per cent.

Mr Lansley has asked the MHRA and the expert panel, led by Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, medical director of the NHS, to report back to him later this week.

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They are due to meet on Wednesday. Other members include Richard Rainsbury, president of the Association of Breast Surgeons, and Fazel Fatah, president of the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons.

However, Mr Goodacre thought it unlikely that the Department of Health would make a decision on whether or not to recommend blanket removal until it had scrutinised data from across the industry in more detail.

Due to the way information on breast implants is held - individually by clinics but not centrally - he warned that could take "weeks".

"If they want to go back to check the hospital-based registeries, that will take time," he said.

He emphasised that women with PIP implants were not at imminent risk of them rupturing, and appealed for them to remain calm.

He advised those with worries to contact their operating surgeon, or failing that their GP.

Hundreds of women have already joined online support groups to swap information and express their anger at being given faulty implants.

Many said they were planning to fund removal operations themselves.

One, Viviana Pineda, wrote on a Facebook support group: "Although I cannot afford this surgery at the moment, I will try to get it done. I just cannot think about living with "this bomb" inside."

The panel is also being asked to examine how cosmetic surgery can be better regulated, in

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light of the episode. Such a report will take longer to compile.

Professor Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer of the NHS, said women with PIP implants “should not be unduly worried”.

She added: “We currently have no evidence to make us think they should have the PIP breast implants removed.

“Because of this, and because removing these implants carries risk in itself, we are not advising routine removal of these implants.”

The implants in question were manufactured by Poly Implants Protheses (PIP), a French company. It fraudulently sold them to clinics as being filled with medical-grade silicon, made from material which had been rigorously safety-tested for use in humans.

In fact they were being filled with a type of industrial-grade silicon used to fill mattresses.

An anonymous tip-off to the French health authorities last year led to the PIP plant near the Mediterranean coastal town of Toulon being closed down. PIP went into liquidation, with no insurance, leaving no company to sue.

Last month French health authorities reported that eight cases of cancer, five of which were breast cancer, had been reported in women with PIP implants.

However, cancer experts in other countries including Britain have dismissed any possible link.

Nonetheless, women whose PIP implants have ruptured have reported significant pain,

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particularly below the arm, with lymph nodes becoming clogged with the silicone gel.

There is also the risk of long-term problems, not least because the gel has not been medically tested.