



Department
of Health



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

From George Freeman MP
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Mr David Stewart
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Room T3.40
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Dec David,

Thank you for your letter of 13 November to Dan Poulter about polypropylene transvaginal mesh.

I am replying as the newly appointed Minister for Life Sciences with responsibility for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and research and innovation in the NHS. My central mission is to accelerate access to new treatments within the NHS. My focus over the next few months will be to accelerate the implementation of our first ever Strategy for Life Sciences, making the UK the best place in the world to design and deliver 21st century healthcare technologies and medicines.

We are aware of the serious concerns raised by professionals and campaigners throughout the UK surrounding particular unique complications that have arisen following surgery for pelvic organ prolapse and stress urinary incontinence using vaginal mesh. These are being taken very seriously by the Department of Health and all the organisations involved.

As you are aware, a working group has been set up and it had its first meeting on 16 July. The group is chaired by Professor Keith Willett, NHS England's National Director for Acute Episodes of Care, and includes representatives from NHS England, the Department of Health, the Scottish Government and the MHRA. The specialist societies the British Society of Urogynaecology, the British Association of Urological Surgeons and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists are also represented, as are patients.

The working group is considering issues of informed consent, data and information, and clinical quality. It is using an evidence-based approach to determine what needs to be done to address the concerns that have been raised. I understand that Professor Willett is aiming for the working group to make recommendations by April next year. The National Clinical Director for Maternity and Women's Health has been involved in both the work in Scotland and the English working group.

The MHRA has produced a report, *Summary of the evidence on the benefits and risks of vaginal mesh implants*, as part of ongoing work and at the request of the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies. This report is available on the MHRA's website www.mhra.gov.uk by searching for the title. It has been sent to the Scottish Government to be made available to the Scottish Independent Review Group on Vaginal Mesh and it has been shared with NHS England's working group on Vaginal Mesh.

You may also be interested to know that the Department of Health has funded a trial on prolapse surgery involving vaginal mesh implants, known as PROSPECT. The results of this are due for publication in March 2016, but a draft report is expected in September 2015. There is more information at <https://w3.abdn.ac.uk/hsru/prospect>.

I hope this letter reassures you that the Government is aware of the concerns raised, and is taking steps to minimise the risks for women implanted with vaginal mesh implants.

Yours,

GEORGE FREEMAN