

Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport submission of 7 March 2022

PE1865/FFFF - Suspend all surgical mesh and fixation devices

Thank you for your letter of 16 February 2022 concerning the above petition.

Firstly, I am grateful to you for bringing the submission from the Shouldice Hospital to my attention. This provides a perspective from a well-respected institution and the views provided on hernia repair clearly require consideration.

As the Committee is aware, the Scottish Government commissioned the Scottish Health Technologies Group (SHTG) to review published evidence on the use of surgical mesh in hernia repair ([Surgical mesh repair of primary inguinal hernia in men \(shtg.scot\)](#) and [Elective surgery using mesh to repair primary or incisional hernias in adults \(shtg.scot\)](#)). In order to reach conclusions and to make recommendations applicable to the NHS in Scotland, SHTG focused principally on high-level evidence derived from randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in the form of meta-analysis and network meta-analysis. This differs from the data sources quoted by Shouldice Hospital (observational studies based on retrospective review or registry data) and helps explain the difference in the conclusions reached.

This notwithstanding, the results reported by the Shouldice Hospital are notable. They do however illustrate outcomes achieved in a centre dedicated to a single condition (hernia) and in a healthcare system different from our own. In the NHS in Scotland, the model for delivering surgical treatment is different and having examined available evidence as described, SHTG supported the continued use of mesh in hernia repair. Significantly, SHTG also signalled the importance of patient preference and the need for alternative treatments to be available, such as natural tissue repair. I believe these latter issues do require further consideration in order to ensure that NHS Scotland can and does offer a range of treatment options and patient choice. Accordingly, the Chief Medical Officer wrote to Scottish Health Boards on 7 December 2021 and hernia repair will be discussed at a future meeting of the Scottish Association of Medical Directors.

Secondly, I understand the Committee also discussed the procurement of hernia mesh, for which NHS National Services Scotland published details on 25 January 2022. It may be helpful if I explain that this was a modification notice that sets out the terms of a short extension to an existing framework for the

supply of hernia mesh products. The framework was extended, early last year, by three months due to Covid-19, but this has now ended and was replaced by a new framework on 1 April 2021 which will run until 31 March 2025. The £3.5 million referenced covered the five-year period from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2020.