

Mesh surgery scandal: US lawyer likens 'dangerous' implants to asbestos as he gives evidence to Holyrood committee

ADAM Slater, who has worked on mesh cases in the US since 2007, said some doctors are now refusing to use the devices - with one branding them as "social cancer".

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US lawyer Adam Slater

A US lawyer has likened mesh implants to asbestos, describing them as "very dangerous devices", as he gave evidence to a **Holyrood committee** .

Adam Slater, who has worked almost exclusively on mesh cases in the US since 2007, said some doctors are now refusing to use the devices, with one even branding them as "social cancer".

He told the Public Petitions Committee that studies into the safety of mesh have been influenced by manufacturers , who enjoy a "close relationship" with regulators of the products.

The committee is currently considering calls to suspend mesh implant operations, which are aimed at treating prolapse and bladder problems, after some women experienced painful complications.

Operations continue to be carried out by some health boards despite a call to suspend them by the then health secretary Alex Neil in June last year.

Sunday Mail reporter Marion Scott has led the campaign for mesh victims with a series of hard-hitting stories .

Mr Slater is currently the lead counsel for more than 7,000 cases in New Jersey.

"The closest analogy I can find is asbestos," he told the committee.

"Something that was thought to be a wonderful invention for a long time and now everybody in the world knows it is something you wouldn't want to go anywhere near."

He said thousands of women in the US are suing both manufacturers and doctors on the grounds that mesh devices are defective or that there was a failure to warn them about the dangers and complications.

The US regulator, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), indicated last April that it plans to reclassify mesh for pelvic organ prolapse as "high risk", but is yet to do so.

Mr Slater said the FDA consults device manufacturers and is being lobbied by them.



Gary F McHarg FOCAL Scotland

Health Secretary Alex Neil meets mesh victims

"There is a close relationship there and it is unfortunate because it takes the FDA away from the neutral objective position it should hold," he said.

He urged UK regulator the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to "look at the studies that are relied on by the mesh manufacturers".

"Most of the studies they rely on are written or investigated by paid consultants," he said.

"I would throw those in the garbage immediately because if somebody is being paid by the manufacturer, there is a financial

bias."

He added: "There has never been a high-level study...that has ever been done that has proven the mesh to be safe and effective.

"Many doctors are being caught up in this because they didn't have the full information and they believed what they were being told by the manufacturers about which women were appropriate women to have these put in their bodies."

He said some doctors were now refusing to use mesh products, with one specialist in California referring to them as "social cancer".

"He has seized putting this mesh in any women's bodies," he said.