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The PIP breast implant scare has affected women across the country. **ROB BELLIS** spoke to a consultant who practises in Wrexham and Chester to find out what effect it has had here.

# 'It's not just about the implant but the anxiety that goes with it'

**T**he scare surrounding the now notorious Poly Implant Prostheses (PIP) implants has caused widespread anxiety among women who have had the operation.

The panic ensued when it was revealed that the French company, the third largest manufacturer of implants in the world, had been using an industrial grade silicon in its implants and they were missing protective barriers.

It is thought as many as 40,000 women in the UK have PIP implants, and, as we reported earlier this week, Spire Healthcare, which runs a private hospital in Wrexham, is organising a recall of all patients throughout the UK who might be affected.

Last week, the UK Government said anyone who had PIP implants through the NHS would be given the option to have them replaced and it expected private providers to follow suit.

It has now been announced that subject to conditions, all women affected in Wales will be offered replacements on the NHS, regardless of who carried out the initial implant surgery.

Mr Fahmy S. Fahmy, a leading



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**I was very surprised the PIP implants got through all the testing**

consultant in cosmetic and plastic surgery who operates NHS and private practices in Wrexham and Chester has been dealing with the effects of the revelations. He said: "I have been contacted by a large number of patients concerned whether they have the PIP implants. As it happens, I have never used them so none of my patients have had them."

"They are not a company I was particularly familiar with. I'd heard of PIP but there are two or three reputable companies known throughout the world and I tend to stick with them. I was very surprised the PIP implants got through all the regulations and testing."

While appreciating the levels of concern, Mr Fahmy has been surprised by some reactions.

"I've had three groups of patients coming to me. The first is my own patients who I know don't have PIP implants but some have still asked for written proof, which shows that element of trust is being affected."

"I'd expect them to take my word – that's the sort of relationship you'd expect between a consultant and their patient – but, to ask for it in writing, they are obviously so worried."

"The second group are patients who have had surgery elsewhere and don't know what implants they have. For whatever reason, they can't get hold of the hospital or surgeon who carried out the surgery. This is a difficult group because there are no means to find out unless they have surgery."

"I've had patients living with an



■ Left: Rob Bellis talk with Mr Fahmy S. Fahmy, a leading consultant in cosmetic and plastic surgery.

anxiety of not knowing what they have and might have to go to the expense of having the surgery to find out."

He continued: "The third group are patients who had surgery somewhere else and know they do have PIP implants. This group is also difficult.

"There may seem to be no indication the implant has to be removed but I think each case must be looked at individually – it's not just about having the PIP implant, but the anxiety that goes with it."

Mr Fahmy said implants will invariably have the name of the manufacturer on them, adding that in the majority of cases an MRI or ultrasound scan will determine whether or not an implant has ruptured. Most women wouldn't

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necessarily know if a rupture had occurred but symptoms of the PIP implants rupturing seemed to be inflammation.

Breast enlargement is one of the most common cosmetic surgery procedures.

"There's sometimes discomfort afterwards but no pain," Mr Fahmy said. "It's an operation where the satisfaction rate is very high and it is very common, which gives you an indication that the success rate is high and the recovery time is very short."

But what happens when they rupture, as it is feared PIP implants are more likely to do?

"The removal depends on the state of the implant," Mr Fahmy said. "Removing an intact implant is a short operation, removing one that has ruptured can take longer, depending on the extent of the rupture and the scar tissue around it."

Mr Fahmy said that for most implants the risk of rupturing is very slight, adding there have been advancements in the materials used by reputable manufacturers in recent years.

He advised anyone who has had breast implants and has concerns to contact the surgeon or hospital who performed the operation, if possible, to find out what implant they have had or to contact a suitably qualified surgeon.

The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons provides details of qualified surgeons ([www.baaps.org.uk](http://www.baaps.org.uk)).



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