

August 26, 2011

To the Panel Members and the FDA,

I am a registered nurse. At that time I was offered a four-year scholarship to NYU Medical School but due to the fact that I had just joined the Army nurse corps, I turned down the scholarship. I had attained the rank of Major and was promoted ahead of my peers at every promotion board. I retired my commission after having three children, feeling it was necessary to put them first. At the age of 34 I requested a breast lift but the doctor highly recommended implants and said they would last a lifetime! I was not informed of all the complaints regarding the implants. I wish I had known that, because undoubtedly my life would have been different.

Within one month of implantation I developed capsular contracture of the left breast and had three closed capsulotomies. That's when the breasts are squeezed very hard to break up the capsules. They failed, so I had an open capsulotomy under anesthesia. Three years later, my right breast implant became hard and it was recommended that I have the implants replaced. The doctor told me that upon explantation he discovered that the left implant was ruptured, which was also confirmed by the operation report. Unfortunately, they could not remove all the silicone that had leaked into my body and, my old implants were replaced with new ones.

I became extremely ill with all-consuming fatigue, which led to me being bedridden for two years. The doctors I worked with were my primary care physicians. Since they knew me for years and knew I was not a malingerer, they took my symptoms seriously and after months of investigation strongly recommended that I have my implants surgically removed. This was five years after implantation. I was diagnosed with one autoimmune disease after another (Raynauds, sjogrens, epi scleritis, vasculitis, primary biliary cirrhosis), the worse being primary biliary cirrhosis. I was told I should go on the transplant list because my liver will fail within two years.

It took one year after explantation for me to be able to function for up to two hours per day but that is still all the stamina I have.

Obviously, I have not been able to work at the occupation that I so loved, I could not be the wife I wanted to be, but most upsetting is that I could not mother my children (their ages at the time I was bedridden were 7, 8, 9) the way they deserved. I have not been able to care for ailing parents the way I wanted to and frankly I feel cheated. It is unconscionable that the FDA lets this happen!

At this meeting, you will be asked what research is needed on breast implants. I understand that the FDA is saying that autoimmune diseases do not seem to be caused by breast implants, or at least not often. Yet, I know many women who have had experiences just like mine. Many get better after their implants are removed, but that seems not to happen if a lot of silicone is left in the body after a rupture. Why not study women whose implants ruptured and leaked into their bodies, to see whether they tend to get ill, and whether their health improves when the implants are removed? Please require better research that more carefully examines the impact of ruptured implant before other lives are destroyed as mine has been. If some implants are safer than others, that is also information that women deserve to know. And please make sure that women are warned about what can happen to them.

Sincerely,