

## SPECIAL REPORT

# Birthday 'gift' was a killer diagnosis

**SUE DUNLEVY**  
NATIONAL HEALTH REPORTER

STACEY Franks was supposed to enjoy a trip to New York to celebrate her 50th birthday — instead she received a diagnosis of cancer linked to her breast implants.

Last month, 10 years after she had rough-textured Allergan breast implants implanted, her left breast swelled to double its size.

An ultrasound confirmed the implant had ruptured and the surgeon who was preparing to remove it warned her he would need to test the fluid around the implant for cancer.

"I didn't know what he was talking about, I'd never heard of cancer linked to breast implants, I don't recall being told anything about it when they were put in," she said. "There was no suggestion I needed regular check-ups or surveillance for cancer and none of my friends with breast implants had surveillance either."

Eight days after the operation to remove the implants she was told she had BIA-ALCL.

Luckily a scan confirmed the cancer had not spread.

"If I was told as a 40-year-old woman with two children that I had a one in 2000 chance of cancer I would never have got implants in the first place," she said.

Ms Franks said it cost her \$7700 in out-of-pocket medical expenses to have the implants removed and tested.

She also had to take six weeks off work and lost the \$2000 deposit she put on her birthday holiday to New York.

"We definitely need to ban these implants," Ms Franks said.

# Rare cancer lurking in breast implants

## EXCLUSIVE

**SUE DUNLEVY**  
NATIONAL HEALTH REPORTER

CANCER cases linked to breast implants have soared an alarming 56.5 per cent in the past 18 months, with three women dying from the rare disease.

Tragically, many of the women fitted with implants now linked to cancer had them put in after a mastectomy to treat breast cancer.

Experts fear this is just the tip of the iceberg due to the explosion in breast implant surgery rates since 2010. Half the cases of the cancer develop within 7.5 years of the implant and 90 per cent within 14 years.

And, as the cases mount, victims have slammed the companies behind the implants for refusing to pay compensation for corrective surgery, which can cost as much as \$10,000.

Today The Sunday Telegraph launches a campaign to force state and federal governments to step in,

regulate the booming breast implant industry and help affected women.

Macquarie University plastic surgeon Professor Anand Deva and Associate Professor Mark Magnusson said roughly half of the more than 20,000 women a year who had a breast implant in Australia from 2010 to 2015 were fitted with rough textured Biocell devices made by Allergan and polyurethane implants made by Silimed.

Their new research shows the risk of developing a rare cancer called Breast Implant Associated-Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA-ALCL) is 23.4 times higher for women fitted with the rough textured Silimed implant and 16.5 times higher for women with a Biocell implant, compared to those who have a smooth-textured Siltex implant.

BIA-ALCL is a form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer of the immune system.

Prof Deva said he fears more women will fall victim in coming years. This is because many of the dis-count breast implant providers used the higher risk rough-textured Biocell implants.

Prof Deva's research suggests bac-

Stacey Franks has called for a ban on breast implants after being diagnosed with cancer.  
Picture:

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# DEADLY IMPLANTS

Increase in cancer cases reported between December 2016 and April 2018 in Australia and New Zealand



**NAGOR TEXTURED**  
REPORTED CASES:  
5 up to **7**

**POLYTECH TEXTURED**  
REPORTED CASES:  
0 up to **1**

**POLYURETHANE SILIMED TEXTURED**  
REPORTED CASES:  
14 up to **23**

**BIOCELL TEXTURED**  
REPORTED CASES:  
44 up to **61**

**SILTEX MODERATE TEXTURE**  
REPORTED CASES:  
5 up to **7**

**TODAY, THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH BEGINS A CAMPAIGN TO:**

- Require the companies that manufacture the implants to cover the cost of removing them when women develop the cancer
- Demand state and federal governments make reporting of the implants used in each breast procedure to the Australian Breast Device Registry mandatory
- Require all cosmetic and plastic surgeons to check women with high risk breast implants for cancer every 12 months
- Require all breast device companies to declare publicly any payments or discounts they provide to plastic and cosmetic surgeons
- Require all breast implant manufacturers to supply their sales data to researchers so cancer incidence rates can be determined

teria floating in the fluid around breast implants is the cause of the cancer, however there are several other theories.

If detected early the cancer can be treated by removing the breast implant and the capsule surrounding it and no chemotherapy or radiotherapy is needed.

However, if the cancer spreads, more aggressive treatment is needed. Prof Deva and Magnusson's risk calculations — despite being cited by America's medical regulator the Food and Drug Administration — have been challenged by the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery.

"Two years ago a Macquarie University research group claimed the risk of BIA-ALCL was higher with one type of implant from Silimed," ACCS Chief Censor Dr Patrick Tansley said. "Subsequent detailed analysis of their data by the College and others showed that claim to be sub-

stantially incorrect. It remains to be seen if their latest findings are correct and, given their previous incorrect analysis, further investigation will need to occur."

Professor Deva said there are problems because not every company provides sales data but he will keep updating it every year.

The national medical watchdog, the Therapeutic Goods Administration has convened an expert panel to advise it on the implants.

Allergan, the company that makes the Biocell implant, said women fitted with them do not need regular screening to detect cancer and instead it is up to the surgeon to discuss the risks and benefits with patients.

The Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons has backed our call for surgeons to report every implant they use to a new Breast Implant Registry.

The Medical Technology Association of Australia, the peak body rep-

resenting medical device companies, said there are other ways to record medical devices. "We would support measures to enhance the coverage of registries but they are complex and expensive," a spokesman said.

However, Prof Deva said it is time surgeons declared any kickbacks, payments and discounts they receive from device manufacturers, which could influence the devices they recommend to women.

"The US has an open payments system. I think we need that in Australia," he said.

**THE TGA'S ADVICE TO WOMEN IS: "BECAUSE ALCL IS RARE, EXPERTS DO NOT RECOMMEND REMOVAL OF BREAST IMPLANTS FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE NO PROBLEMS WITH THE IMPLANT. IF YOU ARE CONCERNED YOU SHOULD DISCUSS YOUR OPTIONS WITH YOUR DOCTOR."**

**Professor Anand Deva has been studying the rare cancer.**



# Step in and clean up this disaster

SUE DUNLEVY COMMENT

NOTHING could be more devastating after surviving breast cancer than to discover the breast implants fitted after your mastectomy were implanted in a new form of cancer.

That is the crushing problem facing thousands of women in Australia who have had rough textured implants fitted after surgery for cancer or for cosmetic reasons.

It's the latest wake-up call for the cosmetic surgery industry and it's time regulatory action was taken to ensure science and not money rules this arm of medicine.

We are in this fix because cosmetic surgery has developed a concerning culture of money-making.

The latest private health insurance data shows plastic surgeons charge the highest gap payments of any speciality and four in 10 patients face an out-of-pocket expense.

It's become an environment where surgeons see themselves as celebrities, where they show makeover operations live on social media.

The medical device suppliers also have a lot to answer for. They have been caught out putting profits ahead of patient safety.

And when problems arise many device companies are refusing to help to clean up the mess.

Women were never warned about the risk of cancer when they had these implants put in and are now paying \$6,000-\$10,000 for surgery to remove the implants when it is found.

The companies that made the devices should be picking up the bill not the women whose lives are at risk.

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