



Jess

"I regret having the Essure. I wish it had never happened and wish that I could have my previous self back. I wouldn't wish this on anyone."

"In late 2009 I sought a tubal ligation. As a health care student at the time, I understood the risks and benefits. While my BMI was high, I was well and had no blood pressure or diabetes risks, and I understood the risks of general anaesthetic (GA).

A gynaecologist suggested that Essure would be better as it would remove the need for a GA. At the time, I felt like there was pressure on me to accept Essure rather than the tubal ligation as it was a fairly new device and procedure, and as a soon to be health practitioner, I could provide feedback. I left the appointment feeling as if I had been railroaded and talked out of having the tubal ligation.

My care at the time of the implantation and hysterosalpingogram was excellent, apart from the verbal disclosure of a possible polyp in my rectum. I am disappointed that disclosure was only verbal and no clinical follow up was suggested, apart from a brief "you should get that checked out". I admit I didn't quite understand the gravity of the situation and only remembered that conversation once I had been diagnosed with rectal cancer eight years later.

I expected some discomfort in the bedding in phase after the Essure was placed. However, after allowing a reasonable amount of time, the discomfort was not easing. I had particularly sharp pains when driving and found the constant dull ache distracting and bothersome. I told my gynaecologist about the issues I was having with pain. The pain was dismissed as normal, and I was advised to wait and see how it went.

I requested the Essure be removed more than once and had always been met with a definitive no. Appointments were made with a pain team, though I could not understand why medication would be prescribed for something that had a clear way to resolve it: removal!

I trialled a few medications, but my regret and frustration led me to decide that it would just have to be a discomfort I learnt to deal with, as the medication pathway wasn't one I wanted to go down. As someone who worked in women's health and who advocates strongly for a woman's right to choose her treatment, I felt being told medication was the only route wasn't correct, fair or in line with the Code of Patient rights.

As the years went on and the research and reports on the adverse events associated with Essure came out, I felt more and more as if my experiences with pain had been dismissed and invalidated. I am also disappointed my right to clear communication wasn't upheld. At no point have I ever been contacted about the status of Essure. As a now banned device, I believe the DHB should be accountable to the women they placed the device in. If a device is banned, wouldn't you want to be informed?

My complaints of pain were not taken seriously until I was diagnosed with rectal cancer and I believe my pain levels were elevated during the cancer treatment due to the underlying Essure discomfort.

The inability to have my concerns taken seriously for the last ten years has left me distrustful of the health service and is a contributing factor in my ending my career in health care. How on Earth can I believe in my ability to advocate for my patients when I am in constant discomfort and pain from the placement of a now banned device?

By 2022 I had lodged a claim with ACC* in the hope that removal could be expedited. Finally, in early 2023 – 13 years after having the Essure implanted – I had a hysterectomy. When I came out of the general anaesthetic the constant pain I had suffered from the Essure was finally gone.

While it is a relief that the Essure are gone, it has left a painful legacy for me. There has been a lot of focus on my prior PTSD and my "emotional problems", with that phrase being added to my discharge papers. I was asked if I wanted to see the mental health team as well.

I also keep being told no-one else has come forward or seems to have an issue with the Essure devices.

Everything that has happened, including dealing with the rectal cancer and ongoing pain for more than ten years, has hit me severely financially. I don't know how on Earth I can go back to working in women's health after this? I've lost my career to these implants. Working with people who I know dismissed my concerns and obvious pain just feels impossible.

For me there are enormous and ongoing consequences to this; it's gutting."

* Since writing her story, Jess's ACC claim has been denied. She plans to fight that decision.