

Shay



Shay is not the woman, the mother, the wife, she once was; she is not the person she wishes she could be.

Essure has destroyed her life, stolen a career that she loved and left her with chronic pain and health issues she didn't have before Essure was implanted. She has been fobbed off and gaslit by doctors, diagnosed with PTSD and, despite the eventual hysterectomy and removal of the devices, her body has never recovered.

After two children from seven pregnancies, five that ended in miscarriage, Shay couldn't face more of the same. In 2013, she went to her doctor seeking a tubal ligation or hysterectomy. Citing her young age and her weight, the gynaecologist gave her the "hard sell" on the Essure contraceptive device, telling her that no general anaesthetic was required and she'd be "in and out in a day".

Very soon after the procedure, the Essure coils set off a cascade of medical injury that she couldn't have imagined.

At her three-month post implantation hysterosalpingogram Shay experienced extreme pain only to find that the fallopian tubes were not yet blocked and she had to have a second hysterosalpingogram at six months. Despite a sedative the second time the procedure was still agonising. On top of that, there was "flow" of the contrast dye through her fallopian tubes; Essure had been an abject failure as a form of contraceptive.

In May 2015, Shay finally had the tubal ligation she'd originally asked for, and also had a Mirena contraceptive device inserted in her uterus to help deal with the heavy bleeding that Essure had caused.

The next seven years was an ongoing battle in the health system to have doctors listen to her and take her chronic pain and other symptoms seriously. She bounced around from GP to hospital to GP, frequently experiencing gaslighting from the medical "professionals" that she saw.

She was accused of being a drug-seeker, was told it was all in her head, or that her mental health was to blame.

During this period, Shay repeatedly had to explain to doctors about the Essure devices, as many didn't have any idea what they were or how they were supposed to work.

On her second referral to the Burwood Pain Clinic in Christchurch a doctor finally began to think she might be right about the Essure being the cause of her health problems. She had a hysterectomy and it was found that one of the Essure devices had perforated her uterus and that neither coil had been properly implanted in her fallopian tubes. Both had been incorrectly positioned in the cornua of the uterus, the "horns" where the fallopian tubes connect to the uterus, but not in the fallopian tubes themselves. Shay's Essure implantation procedure had been destined to fail from the start.

The long-term impacts of Essure are significant and debilitating. Shay still suffers chronic pain and takes opioid pain medication every day. She suffers with severe issues with her bladder owing to nerve damage in her pelvis. She has no sensation in her bladder and needs a catheter to pee. In addition, the nickel in the coils has set off a hypersensitivity in her body and she is now hyper-reactive with multiple allergies that she didn't used to have.

Shay was diagnosed with PTSD by a psychologist. However, because it can't be tied to a specific incident on a specific date, ACC has denied that she has PTSD and has said that she has an adjustment disorder; difficulty adjusting to the medical injury that she has suffered, effectively telling her it is her fault that she hasn't "adjusted" to the way her life is now.

"Essure absolutely ruined my life," she says. "I am no longer who I was."

"There seems to be no justice for us."

While women in Australia are involved in class action lawsuits against Bayer, in New Zealand, because of ACC, women harmed by these devices get nothing and have no redress.

Shay became quite depressed for a year, but now that she is starting to come out of that she feels like fighting back.

"It's time I said this isn't OK."