



J&J Takes \$12.5 M Hit in Philly Transvaginal Mesh Trial

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Johnson & Johnson's Ethicon unit took a multi-million dollar trial loss over its transvaginal mesh implant at the end of last year, and 2016 started off with the Food and Drug Administration re-classifying the controversial surgical implant to a high-risk device.

Patricia Hammons filed a lawsuit against J&J and its Ethicon subsidiary and claimed that the Prolift mesh implant caused her to suffer a variety of health problems and left her unable to have sex. Hammons, a Wal-Mart stocker from Indiana received mesh to treat a leaky bladder, but required multiple surgeries to treat complications. Even after revision surgery, she continued to suffer problems.

The two-and-a-half-week trial in Philadelphia Common Pleas Court before Judge Mark Bernstein ended with a \$12.5 million jury verdict for Hammons, \$5.5 million in compensation for complications and \$7 million in punitive damages. The jury awarded punitive damages to punish J&J for selling an unsafe product.

"Every American depends on Johnson & Johnson to put safety ahead of selling," Hammons's lawyer, Shanin Specter told the Philadelphia Inquirer. "They aren't doing that, and they need to engage in some honest soul-searching."

In response, Ethicon's spokesman issued a statement, "We believe the evidence showed Ethicon's ... pelvic organ prolapse repair kit was properly designed, Ethicon acted appropriately and responsibly in the research, development and marketing of the product, and the [mesh] was not the cause of the plaintiff's continuing medical problems. We have always made patient safety a top priority and will continue to do so."

Transvaginal mesh devices are plastic, net-like implants used to treat incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse, a condition where women's organs sink into the vagina. The controversial devices drew nearly 100,000 lawsuits against manufacturers such as Ethicon, American Medical Systems and C.R. Bard. Plaintiffs claim manufacturers sold faulty products and hid risks.

Ethicon plans to appeal the verdict.