

Pennsylvania woman wins \$41 million verdict against Johnson & Johnson

by Catherine Dunn

Suzanne Emmett went through surgery after surgery to try to get rid of the discomfort, bleeding, infections, painful sex, and other symptoms from the vaginal mesh implanted inside of her in 2007. But the procedures couldn't fix what the plastic-like mesh had done to her life, according to a lawsuit that claimed the mesh had a high failure rate, and caused irreversible injuries to many women.

On Thursday, a Philadelphia jury awarded Emmett, 57, and her husband, Michael, a \$41 million verdict in a case they brought against medical device maker Ethicon, and its corporate parent, Johnson & Johnson. The amount included \$25 million in punitive damages.

"This jury rightfully compensated one of the thousands of Johnson & Johnson victims terribly injured by its mesh products and sent a strong deterrent message through its punitive damages verdict," Emmett's attorneys **Tom Kline** and **Kila Baldwin**, of Kline & Specter, said in a statement.

It's one of six multi-million dollar verdicts the firm has won in vaginal mesh injury cases, including a \$57.1 million verdict against Ethicon in September 2017. Johnson & Johnson faces 37,400 lawsuits related to pelvic meshes, used to treat urinary incontinence, according to the company's last quarterly filing with securities regulators. The filing lists the suits among the company's "most significant" product liability cases.

Emmett, a resident of Lancaster County, said in the suit that Johnson & Johnson withheld information about the failure rate of its vaginal mesh products, and knew that its "disclosures to the FDA were and are incomplete and misleading."

Johnson & Johnson said it stands by its pelvic mesh products, and plans to appeal the verdict in this case. "We believe it contradicts the evidence that the products were properly designed and that the company appropriately informed surgeons of known risks," Ethicon spokesperson Mindy Tinsley said. She added: "While we empathize with those who have experienced complications, many women with pelvic mesh see an improvement in their day-to-day lives."

The company is also facing backlash over allegations that its talc powder causes ovarian cancer because of asbestos contamination. In a lawsuit filed by 22 women, a circuit court in Missouri ordered Johnson & Johnson to pay more than \$4 billion in damages — one of the largest personal-injury awards, according to the New York Times. The company — which disputes claims that it has known about asbestos contamination — is facing at least 11,700 talc powder-related lawsuits

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