

Joint statement:

The Association of Breast Surgery (ABS)

The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS)

The British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS)

Breast implant safety

An International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and a large number of media organisations around the world have highlighted what they feel to be regulatory deficiencies in bringing medical implants to the healthcare sector and their subsequent surveillance in patients. Much of their focus has been on breast implants which are used by breast and plastic surgeons in the UK for both breast reconstruction procedures after breast cancer and cosmetic breast augmentation.

The three UK surgical specialty associations involved in breast surgery are dedicated to setting and advancing standards in breast care for the benefit and safety of patients. Breast implants are safe, but have rare, sometimes serious, side effects. We fully support the [statement](#) made yesterday (26th November 2018) by the International Collaboration of Breast Registry Activities (ICOBRA) which aims to clarify some questions around the safety of breast implants.

The consortium of journalists has highlighted the known link between breast implants that have a textured surface and the condition Breast Implant Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA-ALCL). BIA-ALCL is rare and, usually, eminently treatable. ([Statement available here](#)) Current research suggests the risk of developing this condition in the UK is approximately 1 in 24,000 breast implants sold. Not all textured surfaces are manufactured in the same way and they appear to convey different levels of risk, hence it is difficult to draw definite conclusions about the type of texturing at this time. Texturing of an implant surface however conveys advantages over smooth implants, particularly with more naturally shaped implants. Hence many surgeons in the UK still advocate the use of textured implants for their patients. It is vital however, that the risks of using textured or smooth surfaced implants are fully discussed with all patients before surgery so that they are able to make fully informed choices.

We believe that the collection of high quality data on activity and outcomes in breast implant surgery is essential to informing patients about their safety. The re-establishment of a Breast Implant Registry in England in 2016 was a positive development and we encourage our members to obtain consent from their patients to register their implant surgery. However, we remain concerned that this is a voluntary 'opt in' registry rather than a mandatory process for the collection of data on all breast implant surgery and also that it is not a UK wide registry. We look to the government to improve patient safety by correcting these anomalies and to confirm long term funding for the registry.