

Faulty breast implant company founder faces jail in France

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A French appeals court on Monday upheld a four-year prison sentence for the founder of PIP, the manufacturer of defective breast implants that caused a health scare across Europe and South America.

The court in the southern city of Aix-en-Provence confirmed the fraud convictions against Poly Implant Prothese (PIP) founder Jean-Claude Mas, 76.

The court also upheld the 2013 trial's order that Mas pay 75,000 euros (\$86,000) and be banned for life from working in medical services or running a company.

Mas also faces two other pending legal cases, one for involuntary manslaughter—the implants were suspected in several deaths from systemic toxicity—and another linked to the financial implications of the scandal.

The court also upheld guilty verdicts against four other PIP executives. One, the firm's former finance director Claude Couty, will serve a one-year [prison sentence](#).

The scandal first emerged in 2010 after doctors noticed abnormally high rupture rates in women with PIP implants.

It gathered steam worldwide in 2011, with some 300,000 women in 65 countries believed to have received the faulty implants.

In France alone, 18,000 women had PIP implants removed because of a risk of rupture or because they had become highly uncomfortable.

In the appeal, which was held at a congress centre to accommodate all the plaintiffs, Mas denied that the implants made by his company from industrial-grade silicon gel carried any health risk and insisted that they had been subjected to comprehensive tests.

Seven times cheaper

The prosecution said Mas "was not a scientist at all—his only concern was financial". The gel that PIP produced was seven times cheaper than a substance that it could have bought.

"The PIP gel was the best," Mas insisted. When the chief judge Eric Cibiél asked whether it was also the cheapest, Mas said: "Well yes, and all the better for it."

Mas denied that he had committed fraud, telling the court: "I fail to see who has been defrauded."

Yet tests showed that PIP implants ruptured more easily than other implants.

One victim told the appeal that PIP had ruined thousands of lives. Around 7,000 women have sued for damages.

"They made laboratory rats of 7,000 of us," one woman said. The faulty implants had caused a "health time bomb".

PIP employees testified that Mas ruled the company with an iron fist and refused to accept any criticism, especially of "his" gel.

He claimed he had been ruined by the scandal and had to survive on his monthly pension of 1,850 euros (\$2,125).

The scandal had ramifications around the world.

It is thought that around 47,000 British women received PIP implants, with the vast majority fitted by private clinics, mostly for breast reconstruction after cancer treatment.

More than half of PIP implants were exported to South America.

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