Silicone mammary implants

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In the wake of two petitions to Parliament by members of the public worried about - or victims of - silicone breast implants, the committee adopted an own-initiative report by Janelly FOURTOU (EPP-ED, F) calling for legislation to protect patients' health and improve the marketing and quality control of such implants. In the light of the proposals contained in the report of May 2000 by Parliament's scientific assessment unit (STOA), the committee opted for strict rules rather than a total ban on silicone implants. However, in view of the rise since the early 1990s of operations for cosmetic purposes on younger and younger people, it called for a ban on cosmetic breast implants on patients under 18 years of age. It welcomed the fact that the Commission would be issuing a policy paper on this subject in 2001, and called on the Commission to take a number of recommendations into account. All patients should have access to complete information, free of charge, compiled by independent experts. In addition, every person who had had an implant should be issued with a passport listing the specifications of the implant and the postoperative precautions to take. The report also called for national breast implant registers to be set up in each Member State. These would constitute databases for long-term research while respecting privacy and confidentiality. The committee also felt that any advertising for breast implants for use in cosmetic surgery should carry health warnings and warnings about residual risks and possible side-effects. Lastly, as the risks of this type of operation were not fully known, the committee stressed the need for research programmes and recommended that further scientific and clinical research be carried out to look into the long-term health effects, including possible effects on the children of women who have had breast implants, and into techniques for measuring silicone concentrations in body fluids and tissue.